

C A L L

TO THE

UNCONVERTED.

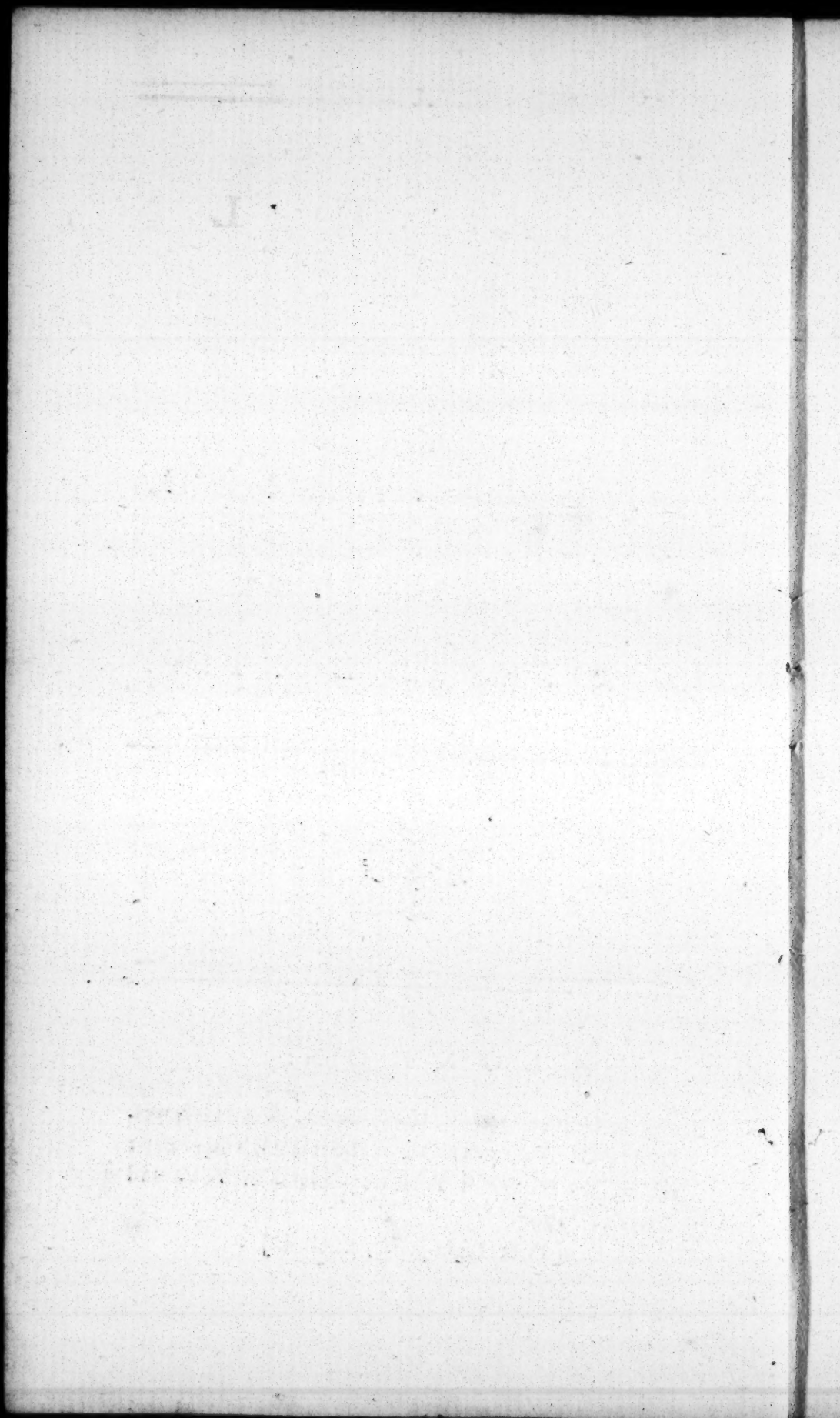
By RICHARD BAXTER.



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C A L L
T O T H E
U N C O N V E R T E D.

Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way and live ; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel.

IT has been the wonder of many to read in the holy Scripture, how few will be saved : and that the greatest part even of those that are called, will be shut out of heaven, and tormented with the devils in eternal fire. Infidels believe not this, and therefore must feel it. Those that do believe it, are forced to cry out with St. Paul, Rom. xi. 33, *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !* But nature itself teaches us all to lay the blame of evil works upon the doers ; and therefore when we see any heinous thing committed, a principle of justice provokes us to enquire after him that did it. If we saw a man killed and cut in pieces by the way, we should presently ask, *O who did this cruel deed ?* If a town were set on fire, you would ask, *What wicked wretch did this ?* So when we read that the most will be firebrands of hell for ever, we must needs think within ourselves, *How comes this to pass ? Who is it that is so cruel as to be the cause*

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of

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of such a thing as this ? And we can meet with few that will own the guilt. It is indeed confessed by all, that Satan is the cause; but that resolves not the doubt, because he is not the principal cause. He does not force men to sin, but tempts them to it, and leaves it to their own wills, whether they will do it or not. It lies therefore between God himself and the sinner; one of them must be the principal cause of all this misery; for there is no other to cast it upon: and God disclaims it: he will not take it upon him. And the wicked disclaim it usually, and they will not take it upon them. And this is the controversy which is here carried on in my text.

The Lord complains of the people; and the people think it is the fault of God. They say, ver. 10, *If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how shall we then live?* As if they should say, if we must die, how can we help it? As if it were not their fault but God's. But God, in my text, clears himself of it, and tells them how they may help it if they will, and persuades them to use the means; and if they will not be persuaded, he lets them know that it is their own fault; and if this will not satisfy them, he will not therefore forbear to punish them. It is he that will be the Judge; and he will judge them according to their ways; they are no judges of him or of themselves, as wanting authority, and wisdom, and impartiality: nor is it the cavilling with God, that shall serve their turn, or save them from the execution of Justice.

The words of this verse contain, 1. God's clearing of himself from the blame of their destruction. This he does, not by disowning his law, that *the wicked shall die*, nor by disowning his execution according to that law, or giving them any hopes that the law shall not be executed; but by professing that it is not their death that he takes pleasure in, but their returning rather, that they may live: and this he confirms to them by his oath. 2. An express

press exhortation to the wicked to return; wherein God does not ~~only~~ command, but persuade, and condescend also to reason the case with them. Why will they die? The direct end of this exhortation is, That they may return and live. The secondary ends upon supposition that this is not attained, are these two. First to convince them, that it is not the fault of God if they be miserable. Secondly, to convince them from their manifest wilfulness in rejecting all his commands and persuasions, that it is *their own* fault; and they die, even because they will die.

The substance of the text lies in these observations following:

Doct. 1. It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men must turn or die.

Doct. 2. It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live, if they will turn.

Doct. 3. God takes pleasure in men's conversion, and salvation, but not in their death or damnation; he had rather they would return and live, than go on and die.

Doct. 4. This is a most certain truth, which because God would not have men to question, he has confirmed to them solemnly by his oath.

Doct. 5. The Lord redoubles his commands and persuasions to the wicked to turn.

Doct. 6. The Lord condescends to reason the case with them, and asks the wicked, why they will die.

Doct. 7. If after all this the wicked will not turn, it is not the fault of God that they perish, but of themselves; their own wilfulness is the cause of their damnation; they therefore die, because they will die.

Having laid the text open before your eyes in these plain propositions, I shall next speak somewhat of each of them in order, though very briefly.

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DOCTRINE I.

IT is the unchangeable Law of God, that wicked men must turn or die.

If you will believe God, believe this: there is but one of these two ways for every wicked man, either Conversion or Damnation. I know, the wicked will hardly be persuaded either of the truth or equity of this. No wonder if the guilty quarrel with the law. Few men are apt to believe that, which they would not have to be true; and fewer would have that to be true, which they apprehend to be against them. But it is not quarrelling with the law or with the Judge that will save the malefactor. Believing and regarding the law might have prevented his death: but denying and accusing it, will but hasten it. If it were not so, an hundred would bring their *reasons against* the law, for one that would bring his reason to the law: and men would rather choose to give their reasons why they should not be punished, than to hear the commands and reasons of their Governors, which require them to obey. The law was not made for you to judge, but that you might be ruled, and judged by it.

But if there be any so blind as to question either the truth or the justice of the law of God, I shall briefly give you evidence of both.

And first, If you doubt whether this be the word of God or not, besides an hundred other texts, you may be satisfied by these few. Matt. xviii. 3. *Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.* John iii. 3, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* 2 Cor. v. 17, *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new.* Heb. xii. 14. *Without holiness no man shall see God.* Rom. viii. 8, 9, *They that are in the flesh, cannot please God. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

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Wis. Psal. ix. 17, The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God. Psal. xi. 5. The Lord loveth the righteous, but the wicked his soul hateth.

I need not add any more of that multitude which speak the like : if thou be a man that believest the word of God, here is already enough to satisfy thee, that the wicked must be converted or condemned. You must either confess that this is true, or say plainly, you will not believe the word of God. And if once you be come to that pass, 'tis likely you will not be long out of hell. But if you tell God plainly you will not believe him, blame him not if he never warn you more : for to what purpose should he warn you, if you will not believe him ? Should he send an angel from heaven to you, it seems you would not believe. For an angel can speak but the word of God : and if an angel should bring you any other gospel, you are not to receive it, but to hold him accursed. And surely there is no angel to be believed before the Son of God, who came from the Father to bring us this doctrine. And if you stand on these terms with God, I shall leave you till he deal with you in a more convincing way. God has a voice that will make you hear. Though he *intreat* you to hear the voice of his gospel, he will *make* you hear the voice of his condemning sentence. We cannot make you *believe* against your wills ; but God will make you *feel* against your wills.

But why will you not believe this word of God, which tells us that the wicked must be Converted, or Condemned ? It is because you judge it unlikely that God should be so unmerciful ; you think it cruelty to damn men everlastingly for so small a thing as a sinful life. And this leads us to the second thing, which is to justify the equity of God in his laws and judgments.

And first, I think you will not deny that it is most suitable to an immortal soul, to be ruled by laws

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laws which promise an immortal reward, and threaten an endless punishment. Otherwise the law would not be suited to the nature of the subject, who will not be fully ruled by any lower means than the hopes or fears of everlasting things : as it is in the case of temporal punishment, if a law were now made that the most heinous crimes should be punished with a hundred years captivity, this might be of some efficacy, it being equal to our lives. But if there had been no other penalties before the flood, when men lived eight or nine hundred years, it would not have been sufficient, because men would know, that they might have so many hundred years impunity afterwards. So it is in our present case.

2. When you find in the word of God that *so it is*, and *so it will be*, do you think yourselves fit to contradict this word? Will you call your Maker to the bar; and examine his word? Will you sit upon him, and judge him by the law of your conceits? Are you wiser and better than he? Must the God of heaven come to school to you to learn wisdom? Must infinite Wisdom learn of folly? Must the Almighty stand at the bar of a worm? O horrid arrogancy of senseless dust! Shall every mole; or clod, or dunghill, accuse the sun of darkness, and undertake to illuminate the world? Where were you when the Almighty made the laws, that he did not call you to his counsel? Surely he made them before you were born, without desiring your advice; and you came into the world too late to reverse them; if you could have done so great a work, you should have stepped out of nothing, and have contradicted Christ when he was on earth, or Moses before him, or have saved Adam and his sinful progeny from the threatened death, that so there might have been no need of Christ.

3. If sin be such an evil that it requires the *Death of Christ* for its expiation, no wonder if it deserve our eternal misery.

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4. And methinks you should perceive, that it is not possible for the best of men, much less for the wicked, to be competent judges of the desert of sin. Alas, we are all both blind and partial. You can never know fully the desert of sin, till you fully know the evil of sin : and you can never fully know the evil of sin, till you fully know the excellency of the soul which it deforms : no, nor till you know the infinite excellency, almightiness, and holiness of that God, against whom it is committed. When you fully know these, you shall fully know the desert of sin. You know that the offender is too partial to judge the law, or the proceedings of his judge.

5. Can you think that unholy souls are *fit for heaven* ? Alas, they cannot *love God here*, nor do him any service which he can accept. They are contrary to God, they loath that which he most loves ; and love that which he abhors : they are incapable of that imperfect communion with him, which his saints here partake of. How then can they live in that most perfect love of him, and full delight, and communion with him, which is the blessedness of heaven ?

U S E.

I Beseech you now all that love your souls, that instead of quarrelling with God and his word, you will presently stoop to it, and use it for your good. You must ere long be *converted or condemned* ; there is no other way, but turn or die. When God, who cannot lie, has told you this, when you hear it from the Maker and Judge of the world ; it is time for him that has ears, to hear. By this time you may see what you have to trust to. You are but dead and damned men, except you will be converted. Should I tell you otherwise, I should deceive you with a lie. Should I hide this from you, I should undo you, and be guilty of your blood. You see then, though this be a rough unwelcome

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welcome doctrine, it is such as we must preach, and you must hear. It is easier to hear of hell than feel it. Hell would not be so full, if people were but willing to know their case, and to hear and think of it. The reason why so few escape it, is, because they strive not to enter in at the strait gate of Conversion, and to go the narrow way of Holiness, while they have time : and they strive not, because they are not awakened to a lively feeling of the danger that they are in : and they are not awakened, because they are loth to hear, or think of it ; and that is partly through foolish tenderness, and carnal self-love ; and partly, because they do not well believe the word that threatens it. If you will not thoroughly believe this truth, methinks the weight of it should force you to remember it ; and it should follow you, and give you no rest till you were converted. If you had but once heard this word, by the voice of an angel, *Thou must be converted or condemned : turn or die :* would it not fasten on your mind, and haunt you night and day ? so that in your sinning you would remember it ; as if the voice were still in your ears, *turn or die !* O happy were your souls, if it might thus work upon you and never be forgotten, or let you alone till it have driven home your hearts to God. But if you will cast it out by forgetfulness, or unbelief, how can it work to your conversion and salvation ? But take this with you to your sorrow, though you may put it out of your minds, you cannot put it out of the Bible : but there it will stand as a sealed truth which you shall experimentally know for ever, that there is no other way but *turn or die*.

O what is the reason then that the hearts of sinners are not pierced with such a weighty truth ? Believe it, this drowsy, careless temper will not last long. Conversion and condemnation are both of them awakening things ; and one of them will make you feel ere long. I can foretel it as truly, as if I saw it with my eyes, that either grace or hell

hell will shortly bring these matters to the quick, and make you say, *What have I done? What a foolish wicked course have I taken?* The scornful and the stupid state of sinners will last but a little while. As soon as they either turn or die, the presumptuous dream will be at an end; and then their wits and feelings will return.

But there are two things which are like to harden the unconverted, except they can be taken out of the way; and that is the misunderstanding of those two words, THE WICKED, and TURN. Some think it is true, the wicked must turn or die; but what is that to me? I am not wicked tho' I am a sinner, as all men are. Others think, *It is true that we must turn from our evil ways; but I am turned long ago.* And thus, while wicked men think they are not wicked, but are already converted, we lose all our labour in persuading them to turn. I shall therefore, before I go any farther, tell you, who are meant by the wicked, and who they are that must turn, or die; and also what is meant by turning; and who they are that are truly converted.

You may observe, no man is a wicked man that is converted; and no man is a converted man that is wicked; so that to be a wicked man, and to be an unconverted man is all one. And therefore in opening one, we shall open both.

Before I can tell you what either wickedness, or conversion is; I must go to the bottom, and fetch up the matter from the beginning.

It pleased the great Creator of the world, to make three sorts of living creatures; Angels he made pure spirits without flesh, and therefore he made them only for heaven, and not to dwell on earth. Brutes were made flesh; and therefore they were made only for earth, and not for heaven. Man is of a middle nature, between both; as partaking of both flesh and spirit; and therefore he was made both for heaven and earth. But as his flesh is
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made to be but a servant to his spirit, so is he made for earth but as his way to heaven; and not that earth should be his home, or happiness. The blessed state which man was made for, was to behold the glorious Majesty of the Lord, and to praise him among his holy angels; and to love him, and be filled with his love for ever. And as this was the end which man was made for, so God gave him means fitted to attain it. These means were principally two. First, the right inclination and disposition of the mind of man. Secondly, the right ordering of his life and practice. For the first, God suited the disposition of man to his end; giving him such knowledge of God as was fit for his present state, and a heart inclined to God in holy love. But yet he did not confirm him in this condition; but having made him a free agent, he left him in the hands of his own free-will. For the second, God did that which belonged to him; that is, he gave man a perfect law, requiring him to continue in the love of God, and perfectly to obey him. By the wilful breach of this law, man did not only forfeit his hopes of everlasting life, but also turned his heart from God, and fixed it on these lower things; and hereby blotted out the spiritual image of God from his soul. So that man did both fall short of the glory of God which was his end, and put himself out of the way by which he should have attained it; and this both as to the frame of his heart, and of his life. The holy inclination of his soul to God, he lost: and instead of it, he contracted an inclination to the pleasing of his flesh by earthly things; growing strange to God, and acquainted with the creature; and the course of his life was suited to the inclination of his heart; he lived to his own will and not to God: he sought the creature for the pleasing of his flesh, instead of seeking to please the Lord. With this nature, or *corrupt inclination*, we are all now born into the world; for, *who can bring a clean thing, out of an unclean?* Job xiv. 4. As a lion
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has a fierce and cruel nature, before he does devour : and as an adder has a venomous nature, before she stings ; so in our very infancy we have those sinful natures, or inclinations, before we think, or speak, or do amiss. And hence springs all the sin of our lives. And not only so, but when God has, of his mercy, provided us a remedy, even the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the Saviour of our souls, and bring us back to God, we naturally love our present state, and are loth to be brought out of it, and therefore are set against the means of our recovery : and though custom has taught us to thank Christ for his good-will, yet we refuse his remedies, and desire to be excused, when we are commanded to take the medicines which he offers, and are called to forsake all, and follow him to God and glory.

In these few words you have a true description of our natural state ; and consequently of a wicked man. For every man that is in this state of corrupted nature, is a wicked man, and in a state of death.

By this you may understand what it is to be *converted* : to which end you must further know, that the mercy of God, not willing that man should perish in his sin, provided a remedy by causing his Son to take our nature upon him, and being in one person, God and man, to become a Mediator between God and man ; and by dying for our sins on the cross, to ransom us from the curse of God, and the power of the devil : and having thus redeemed us, the Father has delivered us into his hands, as *his own*. Hereupon the Father and the Mediator made a new law and covenant for man : not like the first, which gave life to none but the perfectly obedient, and condemned man for every sin : but Christ has made a law of grace, or a promise of pardon and everlasting life to all that by true repentance, and by faith in Christ, are converted unto God. Like an act of oblivion, which is made by a prince, to a company of rebels, on condition

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they will lay down their arms, and come in, and be loyal subjects for the time to come.

But, because the Lord knows that the heart of man is grown so wicked, that men will not accept of the remedy, if they be left to themselves, therefore the Holy Ghost has undertaken it as his office to inspire the Apostles, and seal the scripture by miracles; and to illuminate and convert the souls of men.

So that you see, as there are three persons in the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: so each of these persons have their several works, which are eminently ascribed to them.

The Father's works were, to create us, to rule us as his rational creatures, by the law of nature; and judge us thereby: and in mercy to provide us a Redeemer when we were lost: and to send his Son and accept his ransom.

The works of the Son, for us, were these: to ransom and redeem us by his sufferings and righteousness; to give out the promise or law of grace; and rule and judge the world as their Redeemer, on terms of grace, and to make intercession for us, that the benefits of his death may be communicated, and to send the Holy Ghost, which the Father also does by the Son.

The works of the Holy Ghost, for us are these; to indite the holy scriptures, by inspiring and guiding the prophets and apostles; and sealing the word, by his miraculous gifts, and works: and the illuminating, and exciting the ordinary ministers of the gospel; and so enabling them, and helping them to publish that word: and by the same word, illuminating and converting the souls of men. So that as you could not have been *reasonable creatures*, if the Father had not created you; nor have had *any access to God*, if the Son had not redeemed you: so neither can you be saved, except the Holy Ghost do sanctify you.

So you may see the several causes of this work. The Father sends the Son: the Son redeems us, and

and makes the promise of grace : the Holy Ghost indites and seals this gospel : the Apostles are the Secretaries of the Spirit to write it : the Preachers of the gospel proclaim it, and persuade men to open it : and the Holy Ghost makes their preaching effectual, by opening the hearts of men to entertain it. And all this to repair the image of God upon the soul ; and to set the heart upon God again, and take it off the creature, to which it has revolted ; and so to turn the current of the life into a heavenly course, which before was earthly ; and all this by the entertainment of Christ, by faith, who is the physician of the soul.

By this you may see what it is to be *wicked*, and what it is to be *converted*. Which I think will be yet plainer, if I describe them as consisting of their several parts ; and for the first, a *wicked man* may be known by these three things.

First, he is one who places his chief content on earth, and loves the creature more than God ; and his fleshly prosperity above the heavenly felicity : he savours the things of the flesh, but neither discerns nor savours the things of the Spirit ; though he will say, that heaven is better than earth, yet does he not really so esteem it. If he might be sure of earth he would let go heaven ; and had rather stay here than be removed thither. A life of perfect holiness, in the sight of God, and in his love, and praises for ever in heaven, do not find such liking with his heart, as a life of health, and wealth, and honour upon earth. And though he falsely professes that he loves God above all, yet indeed he never felt the power of divine love, but his mind is more set on the world, or fleshly pleasure, than on God. In a word, whoever loves earth above heaven, and fleshly prosperity more than God, is a wicked unconverted man.

On the other side, a *converted man* is enlightened to discern the loveliness of God ; and so believes the glory that is to be had with God, that his heart is set more upon it, than on any thing in this world.

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He had rather see the face of God, and live in his everlasting love, than have all the wealth or pleasure of the world. He sees that all things else are vanity; and nothing but God can fill the soul: and therefore, let the world go which way it will, he lays up his treasures and hopes in heaven; and for that he is resolved to let go all. As the fire mounts upward, and the needle that is touched with the load-stone turns to the North: so, the converted soul is inclined to God. Nothing else can satisfy him; nor can he find any content and rest but in his love. In a word, all that are converted, esteem and love God better than all the world; and the heavenly felicity is dearer to them, than their fleshly prosperity.

Secondly, A *wicked man* is one that makes it the *principal business of his life, to prosper in the world, and attain his fleshly ends.* And though he may read and hear, and do much in the outward duties of religion, and forbear disgraceful sins; yet this is but by the by, and he never makes it the business of his life, to please God, and attain everlasting glory. He puts off God with the leavings of the world, and gives him no more service, than the flesh can spare.

On the contrary, a *converted man* is one that makes it the *principal business of his life, to please God, and to be saved; and takes all the blessings of this life, but as accommodations in his journey towards another life, and uses the creature in subordination to God: he loves a holy life, and longs to be more holy; he has no sin, but what he hates; and longs, and prays, and strives to be rid of. The bent of his life is for God: and if he sin, it is contrary to the bent of his heart and life, and therefore he rises again and laments it, and dare not wilfully live in any known sin. There is nothing in this world so dear to him, but he can give it up to God, and forsake it for the hopes of glory.*

Thirdly, The soul of a *wicked man* did never truly discern, and relish the mystery of redemption,
 nor

nor thankfully entertain an offered Saviour, nor is he taken up with the love of the Redeemer, nor willing to be ruled by him, that he may be saved from the guilt and power of his sins, and recovered unto God : but his heart is insensible of this unspeakable benefit, and is quite against the healing means, by which he should be recovered. He never resigns up his soul to Christ, and to the motions and conduct of his word and Spirit.

On the contrary, the *converted* soul having felt himself undone by sin ; and perceiving that he has lost his peace with God, and hopes of heaven, and is in danger of everlasting misery, does thankfully entertain the tidings of redemption ; and believing in the Lord Jesus as his only Saviour, resigns up himself to him for Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. He takes Christ as the life of his soul, and lives by him, and uses him as a salve for every sore, admiring the wisdom and love of God in this wonderful work of man's redemption. In a word, Christ does even dwell in his heart by faith, and the life which he now lives is by faith of the Son of God, who has loved him, and given himself for him. Yea, it is not so much he that lives, as Christ in him.

You see now, who are the wicked, and who are the converted. Ignorant people think, that if a man be no swearer, or curser, or railer, or drunkard, or fornicator, or extortioner, nor wrong any body in his dealings, and if he go to church, and say his prayers, he cannot be a wicked man. Or if a man who has been guilty of drunkenness, swearing, or the like vices, do but forbear them, they think that this is a converted man. Others think, if a man who has been an enemy and scorner of religion, do but approve it, and join himself with good men, and be hated for it by the wicked, this must needs be a converted man. And some are so foolish as to think they are converted,

by taking up some new opinion; or by falling into some party, as Anabaptists, Quakers, Papists, or such like. And some think, if they have but been affrighted by the fears of hell, and thereupon have purposed, and promised amendment, and taken up a life of civil behaviour, and outward religion, this must needs be true conversion. And these are the poor deluded souls that are like to lose the benefit of all our persuasions: and when they hear that the wicked must *turn or die*, they think that this is not spoken to them; for they are not *wicked*, but are *turned* already. And therefore it is that Christ told some of the Rulers of the Jews, who were more moral and civil than the common people, that *publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before them*, Matt. xxi. 31. Not that a harlot or gross sinner can be saved without conversion; but because it was easier to make these gross sinners perceive their sin and the necessity of a change.

O Sirs, conversion is another kind of work, than most are aware of: it is not a small matter to shew man the amiable excellencies of God, till he be taken up with such love to him as cannot easily be quenched; to break the heart for sin, and make him fly for refuge to Christ, and thankfully embrace him as the life of his soul; to have the very bent of the heart and life changed; so that he renounces that which he took for his felicity, and lives not to the same end, and drives not on the same design in the world, as formerly he did. He that is in Christ, is a *new creature*: *old things are past away*: *behold, all things are become new*, 2 Cor. v. 17. He has a new understanding, a new will and resolution, new sorrows, and desires, and love, and delight; new thoughts, new speeches, new company (if possible,) and a new conversation. Sin which before was a jesting matter with him, is now so odious, that he flies from it, as from death. The world which was so lovely in his eyes, does now appear but as vanity and vexation; God who was
before

before neglected, is now the only happiness of his soul ; before he was forgotten ; but now he is set next the heart, and all things must give place to him : and the heart is taken up in the attendance, and observance of him ; and is grieved when he hides his face, and never thinks himself well without him. Christ himself who was wont to be slightly thought of, is now his only hope and refuge ; and he lives upon him, as on his daily bread ; he cannot pray without him, nor rejoice without him, nor think, nor speak, nor live without him. Heaven itself which before was looked upon but as a tolerable reserve, which he hoped might serve better than hell when he could not stay any longer in the world, is now taken for his home, the place of his only hope and rest, where he shall see, and love, and praise that God who has his heart already. The Bible which was before to him but as a common book, is now as the law of God ; as a letter written to him from heaven, and subscribed with the name of the *Eternal Majesty* ; it is the rule of his thoughts, and words, and deeds ; the commands are binding, and the promises of it speak life to his soul. In short, he has a new end in his thoughts, and a new way in his endeavours, and therefore his heart and life are new. So that this is not a change in one or two, or twenty points ; but in the whole soul and conversation.

Do you believe this, Sirs, or do you not ? Surely you dare not say, you do not. These are not controversies, where one pious man is of one mind, and another of another ; all Christians are agreed in this, and if you will not believe the God of truth, and that in a case where every sect and party believe him, you are utterly inexcusable.

But if you do believe this, how comes it to pass that you live so quietly in an unconverted state ? Do you know that you are converted ? Can you find this wonderful change upon your souls ? Have you been thus born again, and made anew ?

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If you cannot tell the day or week of your change, do you find that the work is done? And that you have such hearts as are before described? Alas, the most follow their worldly business, and little trouble their minds with such thoughts. And if they be but restrained from scandalous sins, and can say, *I am no whoremonger, or thief, or curser, or swearer, or tipler, or extortioner, I go to church, and say my prayers,* they think this is true conversion, and they shall be saved as well as any. Alas, this is a foolish cheating of yourselves. This is too gross a neglect of your immortal souls. Can you make so light of heaven and hell? Your corpses will shortly lie in the dust, and angels or devils will presently seize upon your souls, and every man and woman of you all will shortly be among other company, and in another case than now you are; you will dwell in those houses but a little longer; you will work in your shops, and fields, but a little longer; you will sit in these seats, and dwell on this earth but a little longer; you will see with those eyes, and hear with those ears, and speak with those tongues but a little longer; and can you forget this? O what a place, will you be shortly in, of joy or torment! O what a sight will you shortly see in heaven or hell! O what thoughts will shortly fill your hearts with unspeakable delight or horror! What work will you be employed in? To praise the Lord with saints and angels, or to cry out in fire unquenchable with devils? And should all this be forgotten? And all this will be endless, and sealed up by an unchangeable decree. Eternity, eternity will be the measure of our joys or sorrows, and can this be forgotten? And all this is true, most *certainly true*: when you have gone up and down a little longer, and slept and awaked a few times more, you may be dead and gone, and find all true which now I tell you; and can you now forget it? You shall then remember that you heard this sermon, and that on *this day and in this place* you were reminded

mind of these things; and yet shall they be now so much forgotten?

Beloved, if the Lord had not awakened me to believe and lay to heart these things myself, I should have perished for ever: but if he has made me sensible of them, it will constrain me to compassionate you. If your eyes were so far opened as to see hell, and you saw your neighbours, that were unconverted, dragged thither with hideous cries, though they were such as you accounted honest people on earth; such a sight would make you warn all about you, lest they should go to that place of torment. Why, faith is a kind of sight; it is the eye of the soul, the evidence of things not seen; if I believe God, it is next to seeing: and therefore I beseech you excuse me, if I be as earnest with you about these matters, as if I had seen them. If I were to die to-morrow, and it were in my power to come again from another world, and tell you what I have seen; would you not be willing to hear me? And would you not believe, and regard what I should tell you? If I might preach one sermon to you after I am dead, and have seen what is done in the world to come, would you not lay it to heart? But this must not be; God has his appointed way of teaching you; and he will not humour unbelievers so far as to send men from the dead to them, and to alter his established way: if any man quarrel with the Sun, God will not humour him so far as to set him up a clearer light. Friends, I beseech you, regard me now, as you would do if I should come from the dead to you; for I can give you as full assurance of the truth of what I say to you, as if I had been there, and seen it with my eyes; for it is possible for one from the dead to deceive you: but Jesus Christ can never deceive you: the word of God delivered in scripture, and sealed up by the miracles, and holy workings of the Spirit, can never deceive you. Believe this, or believe nothing. Believe, and obey

obey this, or you are undone : now, as ever you believe the word of God, and as ever you care for the salvation of your souls, let me beg of you this reasonable request ; that you would without any more delay, when you are gone from hence, remember what you heard, and enter into an earnest search of your hearts, and say unto yourselves,—Is it so indeed ? Must I turn or die ? Must I be converted or condemned ? It is time for me then to look about me before it be too late. O why did I not look after this till now ? Why did I venturously put off so great a business ? Was I awake ! O blessed God, what a great mercy is it that thou didst not cut off my life all this while ? Well, God forbid that I should neglect this work any longer. What state is my soul in ? Am I converted, or am I not ? was ever such a work done upon my soul ? Have I been illuminated by the word and Spirit of the Lord, to see the odiousness of sin, the need of a Saviour, the love of Christ, and the excellencies of God and glory ? Is my heart broken, or humbled within me, for my former life ? Have I thankfully entertained my Saviour and Lord, who offered himself with pardon and life to my soul ? Do I hate my former sinful life, and the remnant of every sin that is in me ? Do I fly from them as my deadly enemies ? Do I give up myself to a life of holiness ? Do I love it and delight in it ? Can I truly say that I am dead to the world ; and that I live for God, and the glory which he has promised ? Has heaven more of my estimation than earth ? And is God the dearest and highest in my soul ? Once, I am sure, I lived principally to the world and flesh, and God had nothing but some heartless services, which the world could spare, and which were the leavings of the flesh. Is my heart now turned another way ? Have I a new design, and a new end, and a new train of holy affections ? Have I set my hopes, and heart on heaven ? and is it the design of my heart

heart and life, to get well to heaven, and see the glorious face of God, and live in his everlasting love and praise? Do I conquer all gross sins? and am I weary, and willing to be rid of mine infirmities? This is the state of a converted soul. And thus must it be with me, or I must perish. Is it thus with me indeed, or is it not? It is time to get this doubt resolved before the dreadful Judge resolve it. I am not such a stranger to my own heart and life, but I may perceive whether I am thus converted, or not: if I be not, it will do me no good to flatter my soul with false hopes. I am resolved no more to deceive myself, but endeavour to know truly, whether I am converted; that if I be, I may rejoice in it, and glorify my gracious Lord, and comfortably go on till I reach the crown: but if I be not, I may beg and seek after the grace that will convert me, and turn without any delay: for, if I find in time that I am out of the way, by the help of Christ I may turn and be recovered: but if I stay till either my heart be forsaken of God in blindness and hardness, or till I be caught away by death; it is then too late. There is no place for repentance, and conversion then; I know it must be now or never.

Sirs, this is my request to you, that you will but take your hearts to task, and thus examine them till you see, if it may be, whether you are converted or not? It undoes many thousands that they think they are in the way of salvation, when they are not; and that they are converted, when it is no such thing. And then when we call to them daily to *turn*, they think this concerns not them; for they are turned already, and hope they shall do well enough in the way that they are in; when, alas, all this while they live to the world and flesh, and are strangers to God and eternal life. And all this, because we cannot persuade them to spend a few hours in the examining of their states. Are there not many self-deceiving wretches that hear me this day, who never bestowed one hour in all their

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their lives to examine their souls, and try whether they were truly converted or not? O merciful God, who will care for such wretches that care no more for themselves? If all that are in the state of damnation, did but know it, they durst not continue in it. The greatest hope that the devil has of bringing you to damnation without a rescue, is by keeping you blind-fold, and making you believe that you may do well enough in the way that you are in. If you knew that you were lost for ever, if you should die as you are; durst you sleep another night in the state that you are in? Durst you live another day in it? Could you laugh, or be merry in such a state? What! And not know but you may be snatched away to hell in an hour? Sure it would constrain you to forsake your former company, and courses; and to betake yourselves to the ways of holiness. Sure it would drive you to cry to God for a new heart, and to seek help of those who are fit to counsel you. There is none of you, sure, *that cares not* for being damned. Well, then I beseech you, presently make enquiry into your hearts, and give them no rest till you find out your condition; that, if it be good, you may rejoice in it, and go on; and if it be bad, you may presently look about you for recovery, as men who believe they must *turn, or die*. What say you? Will you resolve, and promise to be at so much labour for your own souls? Will you fall upon this self-examination when you go home? Is my request unreasonable? Your consciences know it is not: resolve on it then, before you stir; knowing how much it concerns your souls. I beseech you for the sake of that God who does command you, at whose bar you will shortly all appear, that you will not deny me this reasonable request. For the sake of those souls that must *turn or die*, I beseech you deny me not; make it your business to understand your own conditions, and build upon sure ground, and know for a certainty, whether you are converted, or no; adventure not your own souls on negligent security.

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But perhaps you will say, What if we should find ourselves yet unconverted, what shall we do then? This question leads me to my second doctrine.

DOCTRINE II.

IT is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live, if they will turn to him.

The Lord here professes that this is what he takes pleasure in, that the wicked *turn and live*. *Turn and live*, is as certain a truth, as *turn or die*. Sinners, there are none of you shall have cause to go home, and say I preach despair to you. Are we used to shut up the door of mercy against you? O that you would not shut it up against yourselves! Are we used to tell you that God will have no mercy on you, though you turn? When did you hear a preacher say such a word? You that bark at the Preachers of the gospel for desiring to keep you out of hell, and say, that they preach despair; tell me, when did you ever hear any sober man say, that there is no hope for you, though you repent, and be converted? No, it is quite the contrary which we daily proclaim from the Lord; that whoever is born again shall be saved: so far are we from persuading you to despair of this, that we persuade you not to make any doubt of it. It is life, and not death, which is the first part of our message to you; our commission is to offer salvation, a speedy, glorious, everlasting salvation to every one of you; to the poorest beggar, as well as the greatest Lord; to the worst of you, even to drunkards, swearers, thieves, yea, to the despisers and reproachers of the holy way of salvation: we are commanded by the Lord our Master to offer you a pardon for all that is past, if you will now at last return and live; we are commanded to beseech and intreat you to accept the offer, and to tell you what preparation is made by Christ, what mercy stays for you; what patience waiteth on you; what thoughts of kindness God has towards you:

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how happy, how certainly and unspeakably happy you may be if you will. We have indeed also a message of wrath and death : yea, of a two-fold wrath and death : but neither of them is our principal message, we must tell you of the wrath that is on you already, and the death that you are born under : but this is only to shew you the need of mercy. For who will seek out for physic, that knows not that he is sick ? Our telling you of your misery, is not that which makes you miserable, but that which drives you to seek for mercy. It is you that have brought this death upon yourselves. We tell you also of another death, and much greater torment, which will fall on those who will not be converted. But as this is true, so it is but the last, and saddest part of our message. We are first to offer you mercy, if you will turn : and it is only those that will not turn, nor hear the voice of mercy, to whom we must foretell damnation. If you will cast away your transgressions, and come at the call of Christ, and be converted, we have not a word of damning wrath, or death to speak against you. I do here in the name of the Lord of life proclaim to you all, to the worst of you, to the greatest, to the oldest sinner, that you may have mercy and salvation, if you will but turn. There is mercy in God, there is sufficiency in the satisfaction of Christ, the promise is free and full, and universal ; you may have life if you will but turn. But then, as you love your souls, remember what turning it is which the scripture speaks of. It is not to mend the old house, but to pull down all, and build anew, on Christ the Rock and sure foundation.

Yourselves are witnesses now, that it is salvation, and not damnation, which is the great doctrine I preach to you ; and the first part of my message to you. Accept of this, and we shall go no farther ; for we would not trouble you with the name of damnation without necessity.

But if you will not be saved, there's no remedy, but damnation must take place. For there is no
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middle place between the two : you must have either life or death.

And we are not only to offer you life ; but to shew you the grounds on which we do it, and call you to believe that God does mean, indeed, as he speaks : that the promise is true, and extends conditionally to you as well as others.

If you ask, where is our commission for this offer—among a hundred texts of scripture, I will shew it to you in these few.

First, you see it here in my text, and the following verses, and in the 18th of Ezekiel as plain as can be spoken. And in 2 Cor. v. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, you have the very sum of our commission : *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are past away : behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given us the ministry of reconciliation ; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself : not imputing their trespasses to them ; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation : now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God : for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

You see that we are commanded to offer life to you all, and to tell you from God, that if you will turn, you may live.

Here you may safely trust your souls ; for the love of God is the fountain of this offer, John iii. 16, and the blood of the Son of God has purchased it : the faithfulness and truth of God are engaged to make the promise good : miracles have sealed the truth of it : Preachers are sent through the world to proclaim it : the sacraments are instituted for the solemn delivery of the mercy offered, to them that will accept it : and the Spirit opens the heart to entertain it, and is itself the earnest of the full possession. So that the truth of it is past controversy, that the worst of you all, and every one

of you, if you will but be *converted*, may be *saved*.

Indeed, if you believe that you shall be saved *without* conversion, then you believe a falsehood; and if I should preach that to you, I should preach a lie: this were not to believe God, but the devil and your own deceitful hearts. God has his promise of life, and the devil has his promise of life. God's promise is, *return and live*; the devil's promise is, *you shall live whether you turn or not*. The words of God are as I have shewed you, *except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. xviii. 3, *Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*, John iii. 3, 5. *Without holiness none shall see God*, Heb. xii. 14. The devil's word, *you may be saved without being born again or converted*; *you may do well enough without being holy*; *God does but frighten you, he is more merciful than to do as he says, he will be better to you than his word*. And, alas, the greatest part of the world believe this word of the devil, before the word of God: just as our first sin and misery came into the world. God said to our first parents, *If ye eat, ye shall die*. And the devil contradicts him, and says, *Ye shall not die*: and the woman believed the devil before God. So now the Lord saith, *turn or die*: and the devil says, *you shall not die, if you do but cry to God for mercy at last*. And this is the word which the world believes. O heinous wickedness, to believe the devil before God!

And yet, that is not the worst: but blasphemously they call this *a believing and trusting God*, when they put him in the shape of Satan, who was a liar from the beginning: and when they believe that the word of God is a lie, they call this *a trusting God*, and say they believe in him, and trust on him for salvation. Where did ever God say, that the unconverted shall be saved? Shew such a word in scripture. I challenge you if you can. Why this is the *devil's* word, and to believe it, is to believe the *devil*. And do you call this *believing and trusting*

trusting God? There is enough in the word of God to comfort and strengthen the hearts of the sanctified : but not a word to strengthen the hands of wickedness, or to give men the least hope of being saved, though they be never sanctified.

But if you will *turn*, and come into the way of mercy, the mercy of the Lord is ready to entertain you. Then trust God for salvation, boldly, and confidently; for he is engaged by his word to save you. He will be a father to none but his children, and he will save none but those that forsake the world, the devil, and the flesh, and come into his family, to be members of his Son, and have communion with his saints. But if they will not come in, it is their own fault; his doors are open. He keeps none back : he is still ready to receive you, if you were but ready unfeignedly, and with all your hearts to *turn*. And the fulness of this truth will yet more *appear* in the two following doctrines.

D O C T R I N E III.

GOD takes pleasure in men's conversion, and salvation; but not in their death or damnation: he had rather they would return and live, than go on and die.

For the *proof* of this point, I shall be very brief, because I suppose you believe it already.

1. The *gracious nature* of God has proclaimed, and frequently assured you of this: that he has no pleasure in your death.

2. If God had more pleasure in thy death, than in thy conversion and life, he would not have so frequently commanded thee in his word, to turn; he would not have made thee such promises of life, if thou wilt turn : he would not have persuaded thee to it by so many reasons. The tenor of his *gospel* proves the point.

3. And his commission which he has given to the ministers of the gospel, does fully prove it. If God had taken more pleasure in thy damnation, than in thy conversion and salvation, he would never have charged us to offer you mercy, and to teach you the way of life, both publicly, and privately; and to intreat, and beseech you to turn and live: to acquaint you with your sins, and tell you of your danger; and to do all that possibly we can for your conversion, and to continue patiently so doing, though you should hate or abuse us for our pains. Would God have done this, if he had taken pleasure in your death?

4. It is proved also by the course of his providence. If God had rather you were damned, than saved, he would not second his word with his works, and entice you by his daily kindness, and give you all the mercies of this life, which are means to lead you to repentance, Rom. ii. 4, and bring you so often under his rod, to force you into your wits: he would not set so many examples before your eyes, no, nor wait on you so patiently as he does from day to day, and year to year. These are not signs of one that takes pleasure in your death. If *this* had been his delight, how easily could he have had thee long ago in hell? How oft before this, could he have snatched thee away in the midst of thy sins with a curse, or oath or lie in thy mouth? When thou wast last in thy drunkenness or deriding the ways of God; how easily could he have stopped thy breath, and made thee sober in another world! Alas, how small a matter is it for the Almighty to rule the tongue of the prophanest railer, and tie the hands of the most malicious persecutor, or calm the fury of the bitterness of his enemies, and make them know that they are but worms! If he did but frown upon thee, thou wouldst drop into thy grave. If he gave commission to one of his angels to go and destroy ten thousand sinners, how quickly would it be done! how easily can he lay thee upon the bed
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of languishing, and make thee lie roaring therein pain, and eat the words of reproach which thou hast spoken against his servants, his word, his worship, and his holy ways? How easily can he lay that flesh under ground, and make it more loathsome than the dung of the earth? That flesh which now must have what it loves, and must not be displeased though God be displeased; and must be humoured in meat, and drink, and clothes, whatever God say to the contrary, how quickly would the frown of God consume it? When thou wast passionately defending thy sin, and quarrelling with them that would have drawn thee from it, and pleading for the works of darkness; how easily could God have snatched thee away in a moment, and set thee before his dreadful Majesty, (where thou shouldst see ten thousand times ten thousand glorious angels waiting on his throne) and have asked thee, *What hast thou now to say against thy Creator, his truth, his servants, or his holy ways? Now plead thy cause, and make the best of it thou canst. Now what canst thou say in excuse of thy sins? Now give an account of thy time and of all the mercies thou hast had.* O how thy stubborn heart would have melted, and thy countenance have been appalled, and thy stout words turned into speechless silence, or dreadful cries; if God had but set thee thus at his bar, and pleaded his own cause with thee! How easily can he at any time say to thy guilty soul, *Come away, and live in that flesh no more, till the resurrection.* And it cannot resist. A word of his mouth would take off the poise of thy present life, and then all thy parts and powers would stand still. And if he were to say to thee, *Live no longer, or live in hell:* thou couldst not disobey.

But God has done none of this; but has patiently forborn thee, and mercifully upheld thee; and given thee that breath which thou didst breathe out against him, and given thee those mercies which thou didst sacrifice to thy flesh, and afforded thee that provision which thou spentest to satisfy thy greedy

greedy appetite : he gave thee every minute of that time which thou didst waste in idleness or drunkenness. And does not all this patience and mercy shew that he desires not thy damnation ? Can the candle burn without the oil ? Can your houses stand without the earth to bear them ? As well as you can live an hour without the support of God. And why did he so long support thy life, but to see when thou wouldst bethink thee of the folly of thy ways, and return and live ? Will any man purposely put arms into his enemy's hands to resist him ? or hold a candle to a murderer who is killing his children ? Surely it is to see whether thou wilt at last return and live, that God has so long waited on thee.

4. It is further proved by the sufferings of his Son, that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked : would he have ransomed them from death at so dear a rate ? Would he have astonished angels and men by his condescension ? Would God have dwelt in flesh, and have come in the form of a servant, and have lived a life of suffering, and died a cursed death for sinners, if he had taken pleasure in their death ? Suppose you saw him praying with the drops of blood trickling from him instead of sweat, or suffering a cursed death upon the cross, and pouring out his soul as a sacrifice for our sins : would you have thought these the signs of one that delights in the death of the wicked ? If you had seen and heard him weeping and bemoaning the state of disobedience in impenitent people, or complaining of their stubbornness, as Matt. xxiii. 37. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ?* Or if you had seen and heard him on the cross, praying for his persecutors, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ;* would you have suspected that he had delighted in the death of the wicked ; even of those that perish by their wilful unbelief ? When *God hath so loved, (not only loved, but so loved) as to give*
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his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life : he has proved against the malice of men and devils, that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that they would Turn and Live.

6. Lastly, if all this will not satisfy you, take his own word, who best knows his own mind, or at least believe his oath : but this leads me to the fourth Doctrine.

DOCTRINE IV.

THE Lord has confirmed to us by his oath, that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but had rather that he should turn and live : that he may leave man no pretence to question the truth of it.

If you dare question his word, I hope you dare not question his oath. As Christ has solemnly protested that the unconverted cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven : so God has sworn that his pleasure is not in their death, but in their conversion and life. And as the Apostle says, Heb. vi. 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, *Because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself. For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath : that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us : which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast.* If there be any man who cannot reconcile this truth with the damnation of the wicked, that is owing to his own ignorance : he has no pretence left to deny or question therefore the truth of the point in hand ; for this is confirmed by the oath of God, and therefore must not be distorted to reduce it to other points ; but doubtful points must rather be reduced

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reduced to it, and certain truths must be delivered to agree with it, though our shallow brains hardly discern the agreement.

U S E.

I Do now intreat thee, if thou be an unconverted sinner who hearest these words, that thou wouldst bethink thyself awhile, who it is that takes pleasure in thy sin and damnation? Certainly it is not God; he has sworn for his part, that he takes no pleasure in it. And I know it is not the pleasing of him that you intend in it. You dare not say, that you drink, and swear, and neglect holy duties, and quench the motions of the Spirit, to please God. That were as if you should reproach the prince, and break his laws, and seek his death, and say, You did all this to please him.

Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin and death? Not any that bear the image of God, for they must be like minded to him. God knows, it is small pleasure to your Teachers to see you wilfully run into the flames of hell. Alas, to foresee your everlasting torments, and know not how to prevent them, is to see how near you are to hell, and we cannot make you believe it, and consider it. To see how easily, how certainly you might escape, if we knew but how to make you willing! How fair you are for everlasting salvation, if you would but turn and do your best, and make it the care and business of your lives; but you will not do it! Do you think that this is a pleasant thing to us?

Again, it is none of your godly friends. Alas, it is the grief of their souls to see your misery, and they lament for you many a time, when you give them little thanks for it, and when you have not hearts to lament yourselves.

Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin? It is none but three great enemies of God, whom you renounced in your baptism.

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1. The Devil takes pleasure in your sin and death; for this is the end of all his temptations. You cannot please him better than to go on in sin: how glad is he when he sees thee go to the alehouse, and when he hears thee curse, or swear, or rail? These are his delight.

2. The wicked are also delighted in it: for it is agreeable to their nature.

3. But I know, for all this, that it is not the pleasing of the devil, that you intend: but it is your *own flesh*, the greatest and most dangerous enemy. It is the flesh that would be pleased in meat, and drink, and cloathing, that would be pleased in company and in applause and credit with the world; and this is the gulph that devours all. This is the very God you serve. For the scripture says of such, *That their belly is their God*, Phil. iii. 19.

But I beseech you stay a little, and consider the business.

Your *flesh* is pleased with your sin: but is your *conscience* pleased? does not *it* tell you sometimes that all is not well, and that your case is not so safe as you make it to be? And should not your soul and conscience be pleased before that corruptible flesh? Again, Is not your *flesh* preparing for its *own displeasure* also? It loves the bait; but does it love the hook? It loves the strong drink and sweet morsels! it loves its ease, and sports, and merriment; it loves to be rich and well spoken of by men, and to be somebody in the world: but does it love the curse of God? Does it love to stand trembling before his bar, and to be judged to everlasting fire? Does it love to be tormented with devils for ever? Take all together; for there is no separating sin and hell; if you will keep one, you must have the other. If death and hell be pleasant to you, no wonder then if you go on in sin: but if they be not, then what if sin were ever so pleasant, is it worth the loss of life eternal? Is a little drink, or meat, or ease; is the good word of sinners, or the riches of the world to be valued
above

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above the joys of heaven? Or are they worth the sufferings of eternal fire? These questions should be considered before you go any further, by every man that hath reason to consider, and believes he has a soul to save or lose.

Well, the Lord here swears that he has no pleasure in your death, but had rather that you would turn and live. If yet you will go on, and die rather than turn, remember it was not to *please God* that you did it; it was to please the world, and to please yourselves. And if men will damn *themselves to please themselves*, and run into endless torments, for *delight*; what remedy but they must take what they get by it, and repent it in another manner, when it is too late!

DOCTRINE V.

SO earnest is God for the conversion of sinners, that he doubles his commands and exhortations with vehemency: Turn ye, Turn ye, why will you die?

Is there ever an unconverted sinner that hears these vehement words of God? Is there ever a man or woman that is yet a stranger to the renewing, sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost? Hearken then to the voice of your Maker, and turn to him by Christ without delay. Would you know the will of God? Why this is his will, that you presently turn. Shall the living God send so earnest a message to his creatures, and should they not obey? Hearken then, all ye that live after the flesh; the Lord that gave thee thy breath, has sent a message to thee from heaven; and this is his message, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?* He that has ears to hear, let him hear. Shall the voice of the eternal Majesty be neglected? If he do but terribly thunder, thou art afraid. O but *this* voice does more nearly concern thee. If he did but tell thee, thou shalt die to-morrow, thou wouldst not make light of it. O but this word concerns thy life, or death everlasting.

everlasting. It is both a command and an exhortation. As if he had said to thee, "I charge thee upon the allegiance which thou owest to me thy Creator and Redeemer, that thou renounce the flesh, the world, and the devil, and turn to me, that thou mayest live. I condescend to intreat thee, as thou either lovest or fearest him that made thee: as thou lovest thine own life, even thine everlasting life, Turn and Live: as ever thou wouldst escape eternal misery, Turn, turn, for why wilt thou die?" And is there a heart in man, in a reasonable creature, that can refuse such a message, such a command, such an exhortation as this! O what a thing then is the heart of man!

Hearken then, all that love yourselves, and all that regard your own salvation; here is the joyfullest message that ever was sent to the ears of man, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?* You are not shut up under desperation. Here is mercy offered you; Turn, and you shall have it. With what joyful hearts should you receive these tidings! I know this is not the first time that you have heard them; but how have you regarded them, or how do you regard them now? Hear, all you ignorant, careless sinners, the word of the Lord? Hear, all ye gluttons, drunkards, whoremongers, and swearers; railers and backbiters, slanderers and liars: *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?*

Hear, all ye cold, and outside professors, all that are strangers to the life of Christ, and never knew the power of his resurrection, never felt your hearts warmed with his love; *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?*

Hear, all that are void of the love of God, whose hearts are not toward him, nor taken up with the hopes of glory, but set more on earthly prosperity and delights, than on the joys of heaven; all you that are religious but by the by, and give God no more than your flesh can spare: that have not denied yourselves, and forsaken all that you have for Christ; but have some one thing in the world

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so dear to you, that you cannot spare it for him, but will rather venture on his displeasure than forsake it, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?*

If you never heard it, or observed it before, Remember that you were told from the word of God this day, that if you will but turn, you may live; and if you will not turn, you shall surely die.

What now will you do? What is your resolution? Will you turn, or will you not? Halt no longer between two opinions: if the Lord be God, follow him: if your flesh be God, then serve it still. If heaven be better than earth, come away, and seek a better country, and lay up your treasure where rust and moths do not corrupt, or thieves break through and steal; and with all your might, seek the kingdom that cannot be moved: employ your lives on a higher design, and turn the stream of your care and labours another way than formerly you have done. But if earth be better than heaven, then keep it, and make your best of it, and follow it still. Are you resolved what to do? If you be not, I will set a few more considerations before you.

Consider, first, *What preparations mercy has made for your salvation*: and what pity it is that any man should be damned after all this. God has made to thee a free act of oblivion, and a free deed of gift of Christ and life, and offers it to thee, and intreats thee to accept it, and it may be thine if thou wilt. For, *he was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation*. Sinners, we are commanded to deliver this message to you all, as from the Lord, *Come, for all things are now ready*, Luke xiv. 17. *Are all things ready, and are you unready?* God is ready to pardon all that you have done against him, if you will but come. As long as you have sinned, as wilfully as you have sinned, as heinously as you have sinned, he is ready to cast all behind his back, if you will but come. Though you have been prodigals, and run away from God, and have staid so long, he is ready

ready to meet you, and embrace you in his arms, if you will but turn. Even the swinish drunkards may find God ready to bid them welcome, if they will but come. Does not this turn thy heart within thee? O sinner, if thou hast a heart of flesh, and not of stone, methinks this should melt it. Shall the dreadful infinite Majesty of heaven wait for thy returning, and be ready to receive thee, who hast abused him, and forgotten him so long? Shall he delight in thy conversion, who might at any time glorify his justice in thy damnation, and yet does it not melt thy heart within thee, and art thou not yet ready to come in? Hast thou not as much reason to be ready to come, as God has to invite thee, and bid thee welcome?

Christ has done his part on the Cross, and made such way for thee to the Father, that on *his* account thou mayest be welcome, if thou wilt come. And yet art thou not ready?

A *pardon* is already expressly granted, and offered thee in the gospel. And yet art thou not ready?

The Ministers of the gospel are ready to assist thee, to instruct thee, and pronounce peace to thy soul; they are ready to pray for thee, and to seal thy pardon by the administration of the holy sacrament, and yet art thou not ready?

Yea, Heaven itself is ready: the Lord will receive thee into the glory of his saints, as vile a beast as thou hast been, if thou wilt but be cleansed; thou mayest have a place before his throne: his angels will be ready to guard thy soul to the place of joy, if thou do but unfeignedly come in. And is God ready, the sacrifice of Christ ready, and pardon ready? Are ministers ready, and heaven itself ready, and angels ready, and all these waiting for thy conversion; and yet art thou not ready? What not ready to live, when thou hast been dead so long? Not ready to come to thy right understanding, when thou hast been besides thyself so long? Art thou not ready to lay hold on Christ, who would deliver thee, when thou art even ready

to drown and sink into damnation? Art thou not ready to be saved from hell, when thou art ready to be cast into it? Alas, man! dost thou know what thou dost? If thou die unconverted, there is no doubt to be made of thy damnation: and thou art not sure to live an hour: and yet art thou not ready to turn, and to come in? O miserable wretch! Hast thou not served the flesh and the devil long enough? Hast thou not yet enough of sin? Is it so good to thee, or so profitable for thee? Dost thou know what it is, that thou wouldst yet have more of it? Hast thou had so many calls, and so many mercies, and so many blows, and so many examples: hast thou seen so many laid in the grave, and yet art thou not ready to let go thy sins, and come to Christ? What, after so many convictions, and gripes of conscience, after so many purposes, and promises, art thou not yet ready to turn and live? O that thy eyes, thy heart were opened to know how fair an offer is now made to thee! and what a joyful message it is that we are sent on, to bid thee come, for all things are ready.

2. Consider also what calls thou hast to turn and live. How many, how loud, how earnest, how dreadful, and yet what encouraging joyful calls?

For the principal inviter, it is God himself. He that commands heaven and earth, commands thee to turn, and now without delay to turn: he commands the sun to run its course, and to rise upon thee every morning; and though it is so glorious a creature, yet it obeys him, and fails not one minute of its appointed time. He commands all the planets, and the orbs of heaven, and they obey; he commands the sea to ebb and flow, and the whole creation to keep its course, and all obey him: the angels of heaven obey his will, when he sends them to minister to such silly worms as we on earth. And yet if he command but a sinner to turn, he will not obey him: he only thinks himself wiser than God, and he cavils and will not obey.

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If thou hadst any love in thee thou wouldst know the voice and say, *O this is my Father's call ! how can I find in my heart to disobey ?* If thou hadst any sense in thee, at least thou wouldst say, *This call is the dreadful voice of God, and who dare disobey ?* God is not a man that thou shouldst trifle and play with him : wilt thou yet get on, and despise his word, and resist his Spirit, and stop thine ear against his call ? Who is it that will have the worst of this ? Dost thou know whom thou disobeyest, and contendest with, and what thou art doing ? It were a far wiser and easier task for thee to contend with the thorns, and spurn them with thy bare feet, and beat them with thy bare hands, or put thy head into the burning fire. *Be not deceived, God will not be mocked.* Whoever else be mocked, God will not : you had better play with the fire in your thatch, than with the fire of his burning wrath. *For our God is a consuming fire,* Heb. xii. 29. *O how unmeet a match art thou for God ! It is a fearful thing to fall into his hands,* Heb. x. 31. And therefore it is a fearful thing to contend with him, or to resist him. As you love your own souls, take heed what you do. What will you say, if he begin in wrath to plead with you ? What will you do, if he take you once in hand ? Will you then strive against his judgment, as now ye do against his grace ? *Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle ? I would go thro' them : I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me.* It is an unequal combat for the briars and stubble to make war with the fire.

You see, *Who it is that calls you.* Consider also, *by what instruments, and how often and how earnestly he does it.*

1. Every leaf of the blessed book of God has as it were a voice, and calls out, *Turn and live ; turn or thou wilt die.* How canst thou open it, or read a leaf, or hear a chapter, and not perceive God bids thee *Turn.*

2. The voice of many a *motion* of the Spirit secretly urges thee to *Turn*.

3. The voice of *Conscience*. Art thou not sometimes convinced that all is not well with thee? and does not thy conscience tell thee that thou must be a new man, and take a new course.

4. The voice of all the works of God. For they also are God's books, that teach thee this lesson, by shewing thee his greatness, and wisdom, and goodness, and calling thee to observe them, and admire the Creator, Psa. xix. 1, 2. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.* Every time the sun rises upon thee, it calls thee to *Turn*, as if it should say, *What do I travel and compass the world for but to declare to men the glory of their Maker, and to light them to do his work? And do I still find thee doing the work of sin, and sleeping out thy life in negligence? Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*

5. The voice of every mercy thou dost possess. If thou couldst but hear and understand them, they all cry unto thee *Turn*: why does the earth bear thee, but to seek, and serve the Lord? Why does it afford thee its fruit, but to serve him? Why does the air afford thee breath but to serve him? Why do all the creatures serve thee with their labours, and their lives: but that thou mightest serve the Lord of them and thee? Why does he give thee time, and health, and strength, but to serve him? Why hast thou meat, and drink, and clothes, but for his service? Hast thou any thing which thou hast not received? And if thou didst receive them, it is reason thou shouldst bethink thee, *from whom, and to what end, and use, thou didst receive them.* Didst thou never cry to him for help in thy distress? And didst thou not then understand that it was thy part to turn and serve him, if he would deliver thee? He has done his part, and spared thee yet longer, and tried thee another, and another year; and yet dost thou not turn? How many years has God looked
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for the fruits of love and holiness from thee, and has found none? and yet he has spared thee. How many a time by thy wilful ignorance, and carelessness and disobedience, hast thou provoked justice to say, *Cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground.* And yet mercy has prevailed, and patience has forbore the killing, damning blow to this day. If thou hadst the understanding of a man within thee, thou wouldst know that all this calls thee to *Turn*.

6. Moreover, the voice of every *affliction* calls thee to *make haste and Turn*. Sickness and pain cry *Turn*; and poverty, and loss of friends, and every chastising rod cry *Turn*; and yet wilt thou not hearken to the call?

7. Yea, thine own *engagements* by promise to the Lord, call upon thee to turn and serve him. Thou hast bound thyself to him by a baptismal covenant, and renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil; this thou hast confirmed by the profession of christianity, and renewed it at sacraments, and in times of affliction: and wilt thou promise and vow, and never perform and turn to God?

Lay all these together now. The holy *scripture* calls upon thee to *Turn*; the *Spirit* cries *Turn*; thy *conscience* cries *Turn*; the whole *world* and all the creatures therein, cry *Turn*: the patient *forbearance* of God cries *Turn*: all the *mercies* thou receivest cry *Turn*: the rod of God's *chastisement* cries *Turn*; and so do all thy *promises* to God; and yet art thou not resolved to turn?

8. Moreover, poor hard-hearted sinner! Didst thou ever consider upon what terms thou standest all this while with him who calls upon thee to turn: thou art his own, and owest him thyself and all thou hast; and may he not command his own? Thou art his absolute servant, and shouldst serve no other master. Thou standest at his *mercy*, and thy life is in his hand: and he is resolved to save thee upon no other terms: thou hast many malicious, spiritual enemies, who would be glad if God would but forsake thee, and let them alone with thee, and leave thee to their will: how quickly would they
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deal with thee in another manner? And thou canst not be delivered from them, but by turning unto God. Thou art fallen under his wrath by thy sin already : and thou knowest not how long his patience will yet wait. Perhaps this is the last year ; perhaps the last day : his sword is even at thy heart, while the word is in thine ear ; and if thou turn not, thou art a dead man. Were thy eyes but open to see where thou standest, even upon the brink of hell, and to see how many thousands are *there* already, thou wouldst see that it is time to look about thee.

O what glad tidings would it be to those that are now in hell, if they had but such a message from God! what a joyful word would it be to hear this, *Turn and live* : yea, what a welcome word would it be to thyself, if thou hadst felt that wrath of God but an hour ! Or, if after a thousand, or ten thousand years torment, thou couldst but hear such a word from God (*Turn and live.*) And yet wilt thou now neglect it, and suffer us to return without our errand ?

Behold, sinners, we are sent here as the messengers of the Lord, to set before you life and death : what say you ? Which of them will you choose ? Christ stands as it were by thee, with heaven in one hand, and hell in the other, and offers thee thy choice ; which wilt thou choose ? *The voice of the Lord maketh the rocks to tremble.* But it is nothing to hear him threaten thee if thou wilt not turn. Dost thou not understand and feel this voice, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ?* Why, it is the voice of *Love*, of *infinite Love*, of thy best and kindest friend : and yet canst thou neglect it ? It is the voice of *pity and compassion*. The Lord sees whether thou art going, better than thou dost, which makes him call after thee, *Turn, Turn* : he sees what will become of thee, if thou turn not : he thinks with himself, *Ah, this poor sinner will cast himself into endless torments if he does not turn : I must in justice deal with him according to my righteous law* : and therefore he calls after thee, *Turn Turn, O sinner !* If you did but know the thousandth part as well

well as God does, of the danger that is near you, and the misery you are running into, we should have no more need to call after you to Turn.

Well, are you yet resolved, or are you not? Do I need to say any more to you? What will you do? Will you turn or not? Speak man in thy heart to God: speak, lest he take thy silence for denial. Speak quickly, lest he never make thee the like offer more. Speak resolvedly, and not waveringly: for he will have no indifferents to be his followers. Say in thy heart now without any more delay, even before thou stir hence, By the grace of God I am resolved presently to turn. And because I know mine own insufficiency, I am resolved to wait on God for his grace, and to follow him in his ways, and forsake my former companions, and give myself up to the guidance of the Lord.

DOCTRINE VI.

THE Lord condescends to reason the case with unconverted sinners, and to ask them why they will die?

A strange disputation it is, both as to the controversy: and as to the disputants.

1. The controversy, or question propounded, Why wicked men will damn themselves? Or, Why they will rather die than turn? Whether they have any sufficient reason for so doing?

2. The disputants are God and man: the most holy God, and wicked unconverted sinners.

Is it not a strange thing, that any man should be willing to die, and be damned? Yea, that this should be the case of the greatest part of the world? But you will say, this cannot be; for nature desires the preservation of itself.

I answer, 1. It is a certain truth that no man can will any evil as evil, but only as it has some appearance of good. Misery, as such, is desired by none.

none. 2. But yet, it is most true that the cause why the wicked die and are damned, is because they will die and be damned. And this is true in several respects.

1. They will go the way that leads to hell ; though they are told by God, and man, whither it leads ; and though God has so often professed in his word, that if they hold on in that way, they shall be condemned ; and that they shall not be saved, unless they turn. They have the word, and the oath of the living God for it, that if they will not turn, they shall not enter into his rest. And yet, wicked they are, and wicked they will be, let God and man say what they will. So that consequentially these men are willing to be damned, though not directly: they chuse the way to hell, and love the certain cause of their torments: though they do not will hell itself, and do not love the pain which they must endure.

Is not this the truth of your case ? You would not burn in hell ; but you will cast yourselves into it. You would not be tormented with devils for ever, but you will do that which will certainly procure it. It is as if you would say, *I will drink this ratbane, but I will not die. I will cast myself headlong from the top of a steeple, but yet I will not kill myself: I will thrust this knife into my heart, but I will not take away my life.* Just so it is with wicked men ; they will be wicked, and yet they would not be damned. But do you not know that God has by his righteous law concluded that you must repent or perish ? He that will take poison, may as well plainly say, *I will kill myself* ; for it will prove no better in the end : though perhaps he loved it for the sweetness of the fugar that was mixt with it, and would not be persuaded that it was poison ; but it is not his conceit and confidence that will save his life. So if you will be drunkards, or fornicators, or worldlings, or live after the flesh, you may as well say plainly, *we will be damned* : for so you shall be, unless you turn.

turn. Would you not rebuke the folly of a thief, or murderer, that would say, *I will steal or kill, but I will not be hanged*, when he knows that if he do the one, the Judge will see that the other be done? If he say, *I will steal and murder*, he may as well say plainly, *I will be hanged*; and if you will go on in a carnal life, you may as well say plainly, *we will go to hell*.

2. Moreover, *The wicked will not use those means, without which there is no hope of their salvation*. He that will not eat, may as well say plainly he will not live, unless he can tell how to live without meat. He that will not go his journey, may as well say plainly he will not come to the end of it. He that falls into the water, and will not come out, or suffer another to help him out, may as well say plainly he will be drowned. So if you be ungodly, and will not be converted, or use the *means* by which you should be converted, you may as well say plainly, you will be damned. For if you have found out a way to be saved without conversion, you have done that which was never done before.

So that you may see on what ground it is that God supposes that the wicked *will* their own destruction; they will not turn, though they must turn or die; they will rather venture on certain misery, than be converted; and then to quiet themselves in their sins, they make themselves believe that they shall nevertheless escape.

2. And as this *controversy* is matter of wonder, so are the *disputants* too. That God should stoop so low, as thus to plead the case with man; and that men should be so strangely blind, and obstinate, as to need all this in so plain a case, yea, and to resist all this, when their own salvation lies upon the issue.

No wonder if they will not hear *us*, who are men, when they will not hear the Lord himself: as God says, Ezek. iii. 7, when he sent the prophet to the *Israelites*, *The house of Israel will not hearken*

hearken unto thee : for they will not hearken unto me : for all the house of Israel are impudent, and hard-hearted. But, Woe unto him (saith the Lord,) that striveth with his Maker ! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth : shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou ? Isa. xlv. 9.

U S E.

WHAT sayest thou, unconverted wretch ? Darest thou venture upon a dispute with God ? Art thou able to confute him ? Art thou ready to enter the lists ? God asks thee, Why wilt thou die ? Art thou furnished with a sufficient answer ? Wilt thou undertake to prove that God is mistaken ? O what an undertaking is that ? Why, either he or you is mistaken, when he is for your conversion, and you are against it ; he calls upon you to turn and you will not : he bids you do it presently, even to-day, while it is called to-day, and you delay, and think it time enough hereafter. He says it must be a total change, and you must be holy, and new creatures ; and you think it is enough to patch up the old man, without becoming new. Who is in the right now ? God, or you ? God calls on you to turn, and to live a holy life, and you will not ; by your disobedient lives, it appears *you will not*. If you will, why do you not ? Why have you not done it all this while ? And why do you not fall upon it yet ? Your wills have the command of your lives. We may certainly conclude that you are unwilling to turn, when you do not turn. And *why will you not* ? Can you give any reason for it, that is worthy to be called a reason ?

It can be no good reason which is against the God of truth. That cannot be light which is contrary to the sun. There is no knowledge in any creature, but what it had from God ; and therefore none can be wiser than God. It were damnable presumption for the highest angels to compare with
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his Creator : what is it then for a lump of dirt, an ignorant sot, that knows not himself, nor his own soul, that knows but little of the things which he sees to set himself against the wisdom of the Lord ? It is one of the fullest discoveries of the horrible wickedness, and the stark madness of sinners, that so silly a mole dare contradict his Maker, and call in question the word of God.

And as I know that God must needs be in the right, so I know the *case* is so palpable which he pleads against, that no man can have reason for it. Is it possible that a man can have any reason to break his master's laws ? Reason to dishonour the Lord of glory ? Reason to abuse the Lord that bought him ? Is it possible that a man can have any good reason to damn his own immortal soul ? Mark the Lord's question, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ?* Is eternal death a thing to be desired ? Are you in love with hell ? What reason have you, wilfully to perish ? If you think you have some reason to *sin*, should you not remember that *Death is the wages of sin* ? And think whether you have any reason to undo yourselves, body and soul for ever. You should not only ask whether you love the adder, but whether you love the sting ? Is it such a thing for a man to cast away his everlasting happiness, that no good reason can be given for it: but the more any one pleads for it, the madder he shews himself to be. Had you a lordship, or a kingdom offered you for every sin that you commit, it were not reason but madness to accept it. Could you by every sin obtain the highest thing on earth, that flesh desires, it were of no considerable value to persuade you to commit it. If it were to please your greatest or dearest friends, or to obey the greatest Prince on earth, or to save your lives, or to escape the greatest earthly misery ; all these are of no consideration, to draw a man to the committing of one sin. If it were a right hand, or a right eye that would hinder your salvation, it is the gainfullest way to cut it off, or pluck it out. For

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there is no saving a part, when you lose the whole. So exceeding great are the matters of eternity, that nothing in this world deserves to be named in comparison with them ; nor can any earthly thing, though it were life, or crowns, or kingdoms, be a reasonable excuse for the neglect of matters of everlasting consequence. Heaven is such a thing, that if you lose it nothing can supply the want, or make up your loss : and hell is such a thing, that if you suffer it, nothing can remove your misery ; or give you ease and comfort. And therefore nothing can be a valuable consideration to excuse you for neglecting your own salvation : *What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ?*

O that you did but know what matters they are which we are now speaking of ! There is never a soul in hell, but knows, by this time that it was a mad exchange to let go heaven for fleshly pleasure : and that it is not a little mirth, or pleasure, or worldly riches, or honour, that will make him a sinner that loses his soul.

If you see a man put his hand into the fire till it burn off, you will marvel at it ; but this is a thing which a man may have reason for : as Bishop *Cranmer* had, when he burnt off his hand for subscribing to popery. If you see a man cut off a leg, or an arm, it is a sad sight ; but this is a thing that a man may have good reason for : as many a man does, to save his life. If you see a man give his body to be burnt to ashes, and refuse deliverance when it is offered ; this is a hard case to flesh and blood : but this a man may have good reason for, as many hundred martyrs have done. But for a man to run into the fire of hell ; this is a thing which can have *no reason* in the world to justify it. For *heaven* will pay for the loss of any thing we can lose to get it, or for any labour which we bestow for it. But nothing can pay for the loss of heaven.

I beseech

I beseech you now let this word come nearer to your hearts. As you are convinced that you have no reason to destroy yourselves, tell me what reason you have to refuse to turn and live to God? What reason has the most ignorant careless sinner of you all, that he should not be as careful for his soul as any other? Will not hell be as hot to you as to others? Should not your own souls be as dear to you as theirs to them? Has not God as much authority over you? Why then will you not become a sanctified people, as well as they?

And now either you *have* reason for what you do, or you *have not*. If *not*; will you go on against Reason itself? But you think you have; reason the case a little with me your fellow-creature, which is far easier than to reason the case with God. Tell me, man, here before the Lord, as if thou wert to die this hour, why shouldst thou not resolve to turn this day, before thou stir from the place thou standest in? What reason hast thou to deny, or to delay? Hast thou any reason that satisfies thine *own conscience* for it? Or any that thou dardest plead at the bar of God? If thou hast, let us hear them, bring them forth. But alas, what nonsense, instead of reasons, do we daily hear from ungodly men?

1. One says, *If none shall be saved but such sanctified ones as you talk of, heaven will be but empty: God help a great many.*

What! It seems you think that God does not know, or else that he is not to be believed! measure not all by yourselves! God has thousands and millions of his sanctified ones: but yet they are few in comparison of the world. It better becomes you to make that use of this truth which Christ teaches you: *Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat.*

Object. 2. *I am sure if such as I go to hell, we shall have store of company.*

Anfw. And will that be any ease, or comfort to you ? Or do you think you may not have company enough in heaven ? Will you be undone for company ? Or will you not believe that God will execute his threatnings, because there are so many that are guilty ?

Object. 3. *But I am no whoremonger, nor drunkard, nor oppressor ; and therefore why should you call upon me to be converted.*

Anfw. As if you were not *born after the flesh*, and had not lived after the flesh as well as others ! Is it not as great a sin as any of these, for a man to have an earthly mind, and to love the world above God, and to have an unbelieving, unhumbled heart ? Nay, let me tell you more, that many persons who avoid disgraceful sins, are as fast glued to the world, and as much slaves to the flesh, and as much strangers to God, and averse to heaven, as others are in their mere shameful notorious sins.

Object. 4. *But I mean nobody any harm, nor do any harm ; and why then should God condemn me ?*

Anfw. Is it no harm to neglect the Lord that made thee, and the work for which thou camest into the world, and to prefer the creature before the Creator, and to neglect grace which is daily offered thee ? It is the depth of thy sinfulness to be so insensible of it : the dead feel not that they are dead. If once thou wert alive, thou wouldst see enough amiss in thyself, and marvel at thyself for making so light of it.

Object. 5. *I think you would make men mad, under pretence of converting them.*

Anfw. 1. Can you be madder than you are already ? Or at least can there be a more dangerous madness, than to neglect your everlasting welfare, and undo yourselves ?

A man is never well in his wits till he be converted ; he never knows God, nor knows sin, nor knows Christ, nor knows the world, nor himself, nor what his business is on earth, so as to set himself

himself about it. It is a wise world, when men will run into hell for fear of being out of their wits.

2. What is there in the work which Christ calls you to, that should drive a man out of his senses? Is it the loving God, and calling upon him, and thinking of the glory to come, and the forsaking our sins, and loving one another, and delighting ourselves in the service of God? Are these such things as make men mad?

3. And whereas you say that these matters are too high for us; are the matters which we are made for, and which we live for, too high for us to meddle with? This is plainly to un-man us, and to make beasts of us, as if we were like them that must meddle with no higher matters than what belong to flesh and earth. If heaven be too high for you to think on, it will be too high for you ever to possess.

4. If God should sometimes suffer any weak-headed persons to be distracted by thinking of eternal things: this is because they misunderstand them, and run without a guide. But of the two, I had rather be in the case of such a one, than in that of the mad unconverted world, who take their distraction to be their wisdom,

Object. 6. *I do not see that it goes any better with those who are so godly, than with other men. They are as poor, and in as much trouble as others.*

Answer. And perhaps much more so, when God sees it meet. They take not earthly prosperity for their wages. They have laid up their treasure in another world, or else they are not christians. The less they have, the more is behind; and they are content to wait till then.

Object. 7. *When ye have said all that you can, I am resolved to hope well, and trust in God, and do as well as I can, and not make so much ado.*

Answer. 1. Is that doing as well as you can, when you will not turn to God, but your heart is against

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his holy service ? It is as well as you *will* indeed ; but that is your misery.

2. My desire is, that you should hope in God : but for what is it that you will hope ? Is it to be saved, if you turn and be sanctified ? For this you have God's promise ; and therefore hope for it, and spare not. But if you hope to be saved without conversion ; this is not to hope in God, but in Satan. For God has given you no such promise, but told you the contrary : but it is Satan that made you such promises, and raised you to such hopes.

What say you, unconverted sinners ? Have you any good reason to give, why you should not turn, and presently turn with all your hearts ? Or will you go to hell in despite of reason itself ? Consider what you do in time, for it will shortly be too late to consider. Can you find any fault with God, or his work, or wages ? Is he a bad master ? Is the devil whom you serve, a better ? Is there any harm in a holy life ? Is a life of unholiness better ? Do you think in your consciences that it would do you any harm to be converted, and live a holy life ? What harm *can* it do you ? Is it harm to you to have the Spirit of Christ within you ? And to have a purified heart ? Is it *evil* to be like God ? Is it not said that *God made man in his image* ? Why, this *holiness* in his *image* : this *Adam* lost, and this *Christ* by his word and Spirit would restore to you, as he does to all that will be saved. Tell me truly, as before the Lord ; though you are loth to live a holy life, had you not rather *die* in the case of those that do so, than of others ? If you were to die this day, had not you rather die in the case of a converted man, than of the unconverted ? Of a holy, and heavenly man, than of a carnal, earthly man ? And would you not say as *Balaam*, Numb. xxiii. 10, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his* ? And why will you not now be of the mind which you will be of then ? *First, or last,*
you

you must come to this ; either to be converted, or to wish you had been, when it is too late.

But what is it that you are afraid of losing, if you Turn ? Is it your *friends* ? You will but *change* them : God will be your *Friend*, and *Christ* and the *Spirit* will be your *Friend*, and every Christian will be your *Friend*. You will get *one friend* that will stand you in more stead than all the friends in the world could have done. The friends you *lose* would but have enticed you to hell, but could not have delivered you ; but the friend you *get* will save you from hell, and bring you to eternal rest.

Is it your *pleasures* that you are afraid of losing ? You think you shall never have a merry day again, if once you be converted. Alas, that you should think it a greater pleasure to live in foolish sports and merriments, than live in the love of God and in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. If it be a greater pleasure to you to think of your lands and inheritance (if you were Lord of all the country) than it is to a child to play for pins ; why should it not be a greater joy for you to think of the kingdom of heaven being yours, than of all the riches or pleasures of the world ? I have had myself but a little taste of the heavenly pleasures in the fore-thoughts of the blessed day, and in the present persuasion of the Love of God in Christ ; but I have taken too deep a draught of earthly pleasures ; and yet I must profess from that little experience, that there is no comparison : there is more joy to be had in a day (if the Sun of life shine clear upon us) in the state of holiness, than in a whole life of sinful pleasures. It is but your un sanctified nature, that makes a holy life seem grievous to you. If you will Turn, the Holy Ghost will give you another *nature*, and then it will be more pleasant to you to be rid of your sin, than now it is to *keep* it : and you will then say, that you knew not what a comfortable life was till now, and that it was never well with you till God and holiness were your delight.

DOCTRINE VI.

IF *after all this, men will not Turn, it is not the fault of God that they are condemned, but of themselves, even their own wilfulness. They die because they will die, that is, because they will not Turn.*

If you will go to hell, what remedy : God here acquits himself of your blood : it shall not lie on him, if you be lost. A negligent minister may draw it upon himself ; and those that encourage you, or hinder you not in sin, may draw it upon themselves ; but be sure of it, it shall not lie upon God. The Lord says, concerning his unprofitable vineyard, Isa. v. 3, 4, *Judge, I pray, betwixt me and my Vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it ? What could he have done more ? He has made you men, and endued you with reason ? He has furnished you with all external necessities, all creatures are at your service ; he has given you a righteous perfect law. When you had broke it, and undone yourselves, he had pity on you, and sent his Son by a miracle of condescending mercy to die for you, and be a sacrifice for your sins, and he was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. The Lord Jesus has made you a deed of gift of himself, and eternal life with him, on the condition you will but accept it, and return. He has on this reasonable condition offered you the free pardon of all your sins ; he has written this in his word, and sealed it by his Spirit, and sent it by his ministers : they have made the offer to you a hundred, and a hundred times, and called you to accept it, and turn to God. They have in his name intreated you, and reasoned the case with you, and answered all your frivolous objections. He has long waited on you, and staid your leisure, and suffered you to abuse him to his face. He has mercifully sustained you in the midst of your sins : he has compassed you about with all sorts of mercies ; he has also intermixed afflictions*
to

to remind you of your folly, and call you to your senses : and his Spirit has often been striving with your hearts, and saying, " Turn, sinner, turn to him that calls thee. Whither art thou going ? What art thou doing ? Dost thou know what will be the end ? How long wilt thou hate thy friends, and love thine enemies ? When wilt thou let go all, and Turn, and deliver up thyself to God, and give thy Redeemer the possession of thy soul ? When shall it once be ?" These pleadings have been used with thee, and when thou hast delayed, thou hast been urged to make haste, and God has called to thee, *To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your heart : Why not now without any more delay ?* Life has been set before you ; the joys of heaven have been opened to you in the gospel ; the certainty of them has been manifested : the certainty of the everlasting torments of the damned has been declared to you. Unless you would have had *a sight of heaven and hell*, what could you have desired more ? Christ has been, as it were, set forth crucified before your eyes. You have been a hundred times told, that you are but lost men till you come to him : as often you have been told of the evil of sin, of the vanity of sin, the world, and all the pleasures and wealth it can afford ; of the shortness and uncertainty of your lives, and the endless duration of the joy, or torment of the life to come. All this, and more than this you have been told, and told again : and though all this has not converted you, yet you are alive, and might have mercy this day, if you had but hearts to entertain it. And now let Reason itself be judge : whether it be the fault of God or you, if after all this you will be unconverted and be damned ! If you *die* now, it is because you will die. What could be said more to you ? or what course can be taken, that is likelier to prevail ? Are you able to say, and make it good, *We would fain have been converted, and become new creatures, but we could not : we would have fain forsaken our sins,*
but

but could not ; we would have changed our company, and our thoughts, and our discourse, but we could not. Why could you not, if you would ? What hindered you but the wickedness of your hearts ? Who forced you to sin ? or who held you back from Duty ? Did God put in any exceptions against you in his word, when he invited sinners to return : and when he promised mercy to those who do return ? Did he say, *I will pardon all that repent except thee* ? Did he shut you out from the liberty of his holy Worship ? Did he forbid you to pray to him any more than others ? You know he did not. God did not drive you away from him, but you ran away yourselves. And when he called you to him, you would not come. If God had excepted you out of the general promise and offer of mercy : or had said to you, *Stand off, I will not have nothing to do with such as you, pray not to me, for I will not hear you : if you repent ever so much, and cry for mercy ever so much, I will not regard you* : then you had a fair excuse. You might have said, *To what end should I repent and turn, when it will do no good* ? But this was not your case. You might have had Christ to be your Lord and Saviour, your Head and Husband as well as others, and you would not, because you felt not yourself sick enough for the physician ; and because you could not spare your disease ; in your hearts you said as those rebels, Luke xix. 14, *We will not have this man to reign over us*. Christ would have gathered you under the wings of his salvation, and you would not. What desires of your welfare did the Lord express in his holy word ? With what compassion did he stand over you and say, *O that my people had hearkened unto me, and that they had walked in my ways ! O that there was such a heart in this people, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever ! O that they were wise, that they understood this ! and that they would consider their latter end !* He would have been your God, and done all for you that your
souls

souls could desire : but you loved the world and your flesh above him, and therefore you *would not* hearken to him : though you complimented with him, and gave him high titles, yet when it came to the closing, you *would have none of him*. No marvel then, if *He gave you up to your own hearts lust, and you walked in your own counsels*. He condescends to reason, and pleads the case with you, and asks you "What is there in me, or my service, that you should be so much against me ! What harm have I done thee, sinner ? Have I deserved this unkind dealing at thy hand ? Many mercies have I shewed thee ; for which of them dost thou thus despise me ? Is it I, or is it Satan, that is thy enemy ? Is it I, or is it thyself, that would undo thee ? Is it a holy life, or a life of sin which thou hast cause to fly from ? If thou be undone, thou procurest this to thyself, by forsaking me the Lord that would have saved thee." *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise ? Is he not thy Father that hath bought thee ? Hath he not made thee, and established thee ?* Deut. xxxii. 6. When he saw that you forsook him even for nothing, and turned away from your Lord, to hunt after the chaff and feathers of the world, he told you of your folly, and called you to a more profitable employment, Isa. lv. 2, 3, *Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me : hear, and your soul shall live ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* And when you would not hear, what complaints have you put him to, charging it on you as your wilfulness and stubbornness ! *Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid.—For my people have committed two evils : they have forsaken me the Fountain of living waters : and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.* Many a time has Christ proclaimed the free invitation to you,

Rev.

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Rev. xxii. 17, *Let him that is athirst, come: and who-soever will, let him take the water of life freely.* But you oblige him to complain after all his offers, *They will not come unto me that they may have life.* John v. 40. He has invited you to a feast with him in the kingdom of his grace: and you have had excuses from your grounds, and your cattle, and your worldly business, and when you *would* not come, you said you *could not*: and provoked him to resolve, that you should never *taste of his supper.* And whose fault is it now but your own? And what can you say is the chief cause of your damnation, but your own *Wills*? you would be damned.

U S E.

1. **F**ROM hence you may see, not only what blasphemy and impiety it is to lay the blame of man's destruction upon God: but also how unfit these wicked wretches are to bring in such a charge against their maker. They cry out against God, and say, He gives them not grace, and his threatnings are severe, and God forbid that all should be damned that are not converted; and they think it hard measure that a short sin should have an endless suffering: and if they be damned, they say, they cannot help it: when, in the mean time, they are busy about their own destruction, even cutting the throat of their own souls, and will not be persuaded to hold their hands. They think God would be *cruel*, if he should damn them: and yet they are so *cruel to themselves* that they *will run* into the fire of hell: when God has told them it is a little before them, and neither intreaties nor threatnings, nor any thing that can be said, will stop them. We see them almost undone: their careless, worldly lives tell us that they are in the power of the devil: we know if they die before they are converted, all the world cannot save them: and knowing the uncertainty of their lives, we are afraid every day lest they drop into the fire. And therefore

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therefore we intreat them to pity their own souls, and not to undo themselves when mercy is at hand: and they will not hear us. We intreat them to cast away their sin, and to come to Christ without delay, and to have some mercy on themselves; but they will have none. And yet they think, that God must be cruel, if he condemn them. O wilful, wretched sinners! It is not God that is cruel to you; it is you that are cruel to yourselves. You are told you must *Turn or burn*, and yet you *Turn not*. You are told that if you will keep your sins, you shall keep the curse of God with them; and yet you will keep them. You are told that there is no way to happiness but by holiness, and yet you will not be holy. What would you have God say more to you? What would you have him do with his mercy? He offers it you, and you will not have it. You are in the ditch of sin and misery, and he would give you his hand to help you out, and you refuse his help: he would cleanse you from your sins, and you would rather keep them. Would you have him bring you to heaven, whether you will or no? Or would you have him bring you and your sins to heaven together? Why, that's an impossibility; you may as well expect he should turn the sun into darkness. What! an un sanctified heart be in heaven? It cannot be: *There nothing entereth that is unclean*, Rev. xxi. 27. *All the day long hath he stretched out his hand to a disobedient and gain-saying people*. What will you do now? Will you cry to God for mercy? Why God calls upon you to have mercy upon yourselves, and you will not. Ministers see the poisoned cup in the drunkard's hand, and tell him *There is poison in it*, and desire him to have mercy on his soul, and forbear, and he *will not* hear us: drink it he *must and will*: he loves it, and therefore though hell comes next, he says he *cannot help it*. What should one say to such men as these? We tell the ungodly, "It is not such a life that will serve the turn, or ever bring you to heaven. If a Bear was at your back, you would

mend your pace: and when the curse of God is at your back, and Satan and hell are at your back, will you not stir, but ask, what needs all this ado? Is an immortal soul of no more worth? O have mercy upon yourselves!" But they will have no mercy on themselves. We tell them, the end will be bitter. Who can dwell with everlasting fire? And yet they will have no mercy upon themselves. And will these shameless wretches say, that God is more merciful than to condemn them? when it is themselves that cruelly run upon condemnation, and we cannot stop them. If we fall down on our knees to them, we cannot stop them; but to hell they will go, and yet will not believe that they are going thither. If we beg of them for the sake of God that made them, and preserves them; for the sake of Christ who died for them; for the sake of their own poor souls, to pity themselves, and go no further in the way to hell, but come to Christ while his arms are open, and enter into the state of life while the door stands open, and now take mercy, while mercy may be had; they will not be persuaded. And yet they say, *I hope God will be merciful.* Did you never consider what he says, Isa. xxvii. 11, *It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will shew them no favour.* If another man will not clothe you when you are naked, and feed you when you are hungry, you will say he is unmerciful. If he should cast you into prison, or beat and torment you, you would say he is unmerciful. And yet you will do a thousand times more against yourselves, even cast away both soul and body for ever, and never complain of your own unmercifulness. Yea, and God, who waited upon you all the while with his mercy, must be taken to be unmerciful, if he punish you after all this. Unless the holy God of heaven will give these wretches leave to trample upon his Son's blood, and do despite to the Spirit of grace, and set more lightly by saving mercy, than by the filth of their fleshly pleasures;

pleasures; and unless after all this he will save them by the mercy which they cast away, God himself must be called unmerciful. But he will be justified when he judgeth: and he will not stand or fall at the bar of a sinful worm.

2. From hence you may observe, 1. What a subtle tempter Satan is. 2. What a deceitful thing sin is. 3. What a foolish creature corrupted man is. *A subtle tempter* indeed, that can persuade the greatest part of the world to go wilfully into everlasting fire, when they have so many warnings and dissuaves. *A deceitful thing is sin* indeed, that can bewitch so many thousands to part with everlasting life, for a thing so base and utterly unworthy! *A foolish creature* is man, that will be cheated of his salvation for nothing, yea, for a *known nothing*; and that by an enemy, and a known enemy. You would think it impossible that any man should be persuaded for a little to cast himself into the fire, or water, to the destruction of his life; and yet men will be enticed to cast themselves into hell. If your natural lives were in your own hands, so that you should not die till you would kill yourselves, how long would most of you live? And yet when your everlasting life is so far in your own hands under God, that you cannot be undone till you undo yourselves, how few of you will forbear your own undoing? Ah, what a silly thing is man! and what a bewitching and befooling thing is sin!

Lastly: you may hence learn, that the greatest enemy to man is himself; and the greatest judgment in this life that can befall him, is to be left to himself; and that the great work which grace has to do, is to save us from ourselves: and the greatest complaints of men should be against themselves; and that the greatest work that we have to do ourselves, is to resist ourselves: and the greatest enemy which we should daily pray, and watch, and strive against, is our own hearts and wills; and the greatest part of your work, if you would do good to others, and help them to heaven, is to save them

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from themselves, even from their own blind understandings, and corrupted wills, and perverse affections, and violent passions, and unruly senses; I only name all these for brevity's sake, and leave them to your further consideration.

Well, now we have found out the great murderer of souls, (even men's selves, their own wills) what remains but that you confess this great iniquity before the Lord, and be humbled for it, and do so no more? To these three ends distinctly, I shall add a few words more. 1. Further to convince you. 2. To humble you. And 3. to reform you.

1. We know so much of the exceeding *gracious nature of God*, who is willing to do good, and delights to shew mercy, that we have no reason to suspect him of being the cause of our death, or to call him cruel. He made all good, and he preserves and maintains all; the eyes of all things wait upon him, and he gives them their meat in due season; he opens his hand, and satisfies the desires of all the living. He is not only *righteous in all his ways*, (and therefore will deal justly) and *holy in all his works*, (and therefore not the author of sin) but *he is also good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works*.

But as for man, we know his mind is dark, his will is perverse, his affections carry him so headlong, that he is fitted by his folly and corruption to such a work as the destroying of himself. *Let no man say when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man, (to draw him to sin) but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* You see here that sin is the brat of your own concupiscence, and that death is the offspring of your own sin, and the fruit which it will yield you as soon as it is ripe. You have a treasure of evil in yourselves, as a spider hath of poison, from whence
you

you are bringing forth hurt to yourselves, and spinning such webs as entangle your own souls.

2. It is evident that you are your own destroyers, in that you are so *ready to entertain any temptation* that is offered. Satan is scarce readier to move you to any evil, than you are ready to do as he would have you. If he would tempt your understanding to error and prejudice, you yield. If he would hinder you from good resolutions, it is soon done. If he would kindle any vile affection or desire in you, it is soon done : if he would drive you on to evil thoughts, or deeds, you are so free, that he needs no spur : if he would keep you from holy thoughts, and words, and ways, a little does it, you need no curb. You examine not his suggestions, nor resist them with any resolution, nor cast them out as he casts them in, nor quench the sparks when he endeavours to kindle : but set in with him, and meet him half way, and embrace his motions, and tempt him to tempt you.

3. Your destruction is evidently owing to yourselves, in that you resist all who would help to save you. God would help and save you by his word, and you resist it ; it is too strict for you. He would sanctify you by his *spirit*, but you resist and quench it. If any man reprove you for your sin, you fly in his face ; if he tell you of your danger, you give him little thanks, but either bid him look to himself, or at best put him off with heartless thanks.

Moreover, it is apparent, that you are self-destroyers, in that you *draw the matter of your sin and destruction even from the blessed God himself*. You like not the contrivances of his wisdom : you like not his justice, but take it for cruelty ; you like not his holiness, you are ready to think he is such a one as yourselves, Psal. l. 21, and makes as light of sin as you ; you like not his truth, but would have his threatenings, even his peremptory threatenings prove false. And his goodness, which you seem most highly to approve, you partly resist, as it

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would lead you to repentance ; and partly abuse, to the strengthening of your sin, as if you might the more freely sin, because God is merciful.

5. Yea, you *fetch destruction from the blessed Redeemer, and death from the Lord of Life himself*. Nothing more emboldens you in sin, than that Christ has died for you ; as if now the danger of death were over, and you might boldly venture : as if Christ were become a servant to Satan, and must wait upon you while you are abusing him. And because he is become the Physician of souls, and is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him ; you think he must save you whether you will come to God by him or no. So that a great part of your sins are occasioned by your bold presumption upon the death of Christ.

6. He gives them to you as the tokens of his love, and furniture for his service, and you turn them against him to the pleasing of your flesh. You eat and drink to please your appetite, and not for the glory of God. Your clothes you abuse to pride. Your riches draw your hearts from heaven. Your honours and applause puff you up. If you have health and strength, it makes you more secure. Yea, other men's mercies are abused by you to your hurt. If you see their honours and dignity, you are provoked to envy them. If you see their riches, you are ready to covet them. If you look upon beauty, you are stirred up to lust. And it is well if godliness be not an eye-sore to you.

7. The *very gifts which God bestows on you, and the ordinances of grace, you turn to sin*. If you have better parts than others, you grow proud and self-conceited. You take the bare hearing of your duty for so good a work, as will excuse you for not obeying it. Your prayers are turned into sin, because you *regard iniquity in your hearts*, Psa. lxxvi. 18, *and depart not from iniquity, when you call on the name of the Lord*. Your prayers are *abominable, because you turn away your ears from hearing the law*, Prov. xxviii. 9. And are more ready to offer the
sacrifice

sacrifice of fools, (thinking you do God some special service) than to hear his word and obey it, Eccles. v. 1.

And thus I might shew you in many other cases, how you turn all that comes near you to your own destruction; so clear it is that the ungodly are self-destroyers, and that their perdition is of themselves.

Methinks, now, upon the consideration of what is said, and the review of your own ways, you should consider what you have done, and be ashamed and deeply humbled. If you be not, I pray you consider these following truths.

1. To be your own destroyers, is to sin against the deepest principle in your natures, even the principle of self-preservation. Every thing naturally desires its own welfare or perfection. And will you set yourselves to your own destruction? When you are commanded to love your neighbours as yourselves, it is supposed that you naturally love yourselves: but if you love your neighbours no better than yourselves, it seems you would have all the world damned.

2. How extremely do you cross your own intentions! I know you intend not your own damnation even when you are procuring it: you think you are but doing good to yourselves, by gratifying the desires of your flesh. But, alas, it is as a draught of cold water in a burning fever, which increases the disease. If indeed you would have pleasure, profit, or honour, seek them where they are to be found, not in the way to hell.

3. What pity it is that you should do that against yourselves, which none else in earth or hell can do. If all the world were combined against you, or all the devils in hell, they could not destroy you without yourselves. And will you do that against yourselves, which no one else can do? You have hateful thoughts of the devil, because he is your enemy, and endeavours your destruction. And will you be worse than devils to yourselves?

But

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But thus it is with you, when you run into sin; and refuse to turn at the call of God; you do more against your own souls, than men or devils could do beside. And if you should set yourselves to do yourselves the greatest mischief, you could not devise a greater.

4. It will everlastingly make you your own tormentors in hell, to think that you brought yourselves wilfully to that misery. O what a griping thought it will be to think with yourselves, That this was your own doing! That you were warned of this day, and warned again, but it would not do: that you wilfully sinned, and wilfully turned away from God: you had time as well as others, but you abused it: you had teachers as well as others, but you refused their instructions: you had holy examples but you did not imitate them: you were offered Christ, and grace, and glory as well as others, but you preferred your fleshly pleasure; you had a price in your hands, but you had not a heart to lay it out. Can it choose but torment you to think of this your folly? O that your eyes were opened to see what you have done in the wilful wronging of your own souls! and that you better understood these words of God, Prov. viii. 33; 34; 35; 36; "Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain the favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me, love death."

C O N C L U S I O N .

AND, now I am come to the conclusion of this work, my heart is troubled to think how I shall leave you: lest, after this, the flesh should still deceive you, and the world and the devil should keep you asleep, and I should leave you as I found you, till you awake in hell. Dear friends! I am so loth you should lie in everlasting fire, that
I once

Once more ask you what you resolve on? Will you turn or die? As far as you are gone in sin, do but now turn and come to Christ, and your souls shall live. If it were your bodies which we had to deal with, we might know what to do for you. Though you would not consent, you might be held or bound, while the medicine was poured down your throats, and hurtful things might be kept from you. But about your souls it cannot be so; we cannot convert you against your wills. There is no carrying mad-men to heaven in fetters. You may be *condemned against your wills*, because you *sinned with your wills*: but you cannot be *saved against your wills*. The wisdom of God has thought meet to lay man's salvation or destruction exceeding much upon the choice of his own will; that no man shall go to heaven who chuses not the way to heaven; and no man shall go to hell, but shall be forced to say, *I have the thing I chose; my own will did bring me here*. Now if I could but get you to be willing to be *thoroughly and resolutely willing*, the work were more than half done. And, alas, must we lose our friends, and must they lose their *God*, their *happiness*, their *souls*, for want of this? I do again beseech you, as it were on my bended knees, that you would hearken to your Redeemer, and *Turn, that you may live*. All you that have lived in ignorance, and carelessness, and presumption, to this day: all you that have been drowned in the cares of the world; and have no desire after God, and eternal glory; all you that are enslaved to your fleshly desires, of meats, and drinks, sports, and lusts: and all you that know not the necessity of holiness, and never were acquainted with the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost upon your souls; that never embraced your blessed Redeemer by a lively faith, and with admiring and thankful apprehensions of his love, and that never felt a higher estimation of God and heaven, and a heartier love to them than to the things below: I earnestly beseech

beseech you, not only for my sake, but for the Lord's sake, and for your soul's sake, that you go not one day longer in your present condition; but look about you, and cry to God for converting grace, that you may escape the plagues which are before you. Deny me any thing that ever I shall ask you for myself, if you will but grant me this. Nay, as ever you will do any thing at the request of the Lord that made you and redeemed you, deny him not this: for if you deny him this, he cares for nothing that you shall grant him. As ever you would have him hear your prayers, and grant your requests, and bless you at the hour of death, and day of judgment, deny not his request now in the day of your prosperity. O believe it, death and judgment, and heaven and hell, are other matters when you come near them, than they seem afar off.

Well, I hope that some of you are by this time purposing to turn and live; and that you are ready to ask me, as the Jews did Peter, when they were pricked in their hearts, *What shall we do? How may we come to be truly converted? We are willing, if we did but know our duty. God forbid that we should chuse destruction, by refusing conversion, as hitherto we have done.*

If these be the purposes of your hearts, I say of you as God did of a promising people, Deut. v. 28, 29, *They have well said, all that they have spoken. O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always!* Your purposes are good: O that there were but a heart in you to perform these purposes! And, in hope hereof, I shall gladly give you direction what to do: and that but briefly, that you may the easier remember it for your practice.

D I R E C T I O N I.

IF you would be converted and saved, *labour to understand the necessity and nature of conversion.*

Consider what a lamentable condition you are in till your conversion, that you may see it is not a state to be rested in. You are under the guilt of all the sins that ever you committed; and under the wrath of God, and the curse of his law: you are bond-slaves to the devil, and daily employed in his work, against the Lord, yourselves, and others: you are spiritually dead, as being void of the holy life, and nature, and image of the Lord. You are unfit for any holy work, and do nothing that is truly pleasing unto God. You are without any promise or assurance of his protection, and live in continual danger of his justice, not knowing what hour you may be snatched away to hell: and most certain to be damned, if you die in that condition. And nothing short of conversion can prevent it. Whatever amendments are short of true conversion, will never procure the saving of your souls. Keep this true sense of your natural misery, and of the necessity of conversion on your hearts. And then you must understand what it is to be converted: it is to have a new heart, or disposition, and a new conversation.

Quest. 1. For what must we turn?

Answ. For these ends following, which you may attain: you shall hereby be made living members of Christ, and have an interest in him, and be renewed after the image of God, quickened with a new and heavenly life, and saved from the tyranny of Satan, and the dominion of sin, and be justified from the curse of the law, and have the pardon of all the sins of your whole lives, and be accepted of God, and made his sons, and have liberty with boldness to call him Father, and go to him by prayer in all your wants, with a promise of acceptance;

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acceptance ; you shall have the Holy Ghost to dwell in you, to sanctify and guide you : you shall have part in the communion, and prayers of the saints : you shall be fitted for God's service : and shall have the promise of this life, and that which is to come.

And at death, your souls shall go to Christ ; and at the day of judgment both soul and body shall be justified and glorified, and enter into your Master's joy.

All this the poorest beggar of you that is converted, shall certainly and endlessly enjoy.

DIRECTION II.

IF you will be converted and saved, *be much in secret, serious consideration.* Inconsiderateness undoes the world. Withdraw yourselves often into secrecy, and meditate on the end for which you were made ; on the life you have lived ; the time you have lost, the sins you have committed ; on the love, and sufferings and fulness of Christ : on the danger you are in ; on the nearness of death and judgment ; and on the certainty and excellency of the joys of heaven ; and on the certainty and terror of the torments of hell, and eternity of both ; and on the necessity of conversion and a holy life.

DIRECTION III.

IF you will be converted and saved, *attend upon the word of God, which is the ordinary means.* Read the Scripture, or hear it read, and other holy writings, which do apply it, constantly : and attend on the public preaching of the word. As God will lighten the world by the sun, and not by himself alone without it : so will he convert and save men by his ministers, who are the lights of the

the world. When he has miraculously humbled *Paul*, he sends *Ananias* to him, Acts ix. 10; and when he has sent an angel to *Cornelius*, it is but to bid him send for *Peter*, who must tell him what he is to believe and do.

D I R E C T I O N I V .

BEtake yourselves to God in a course of earnest, constant prayer. Confess and lament your former lives, and beg his grace to illuminate and convert you. Beseech him to pardon what is past, and to give you his Spirit, and change your hearts and lives, and lead you in his ways, and save you from temptation. And ply his work daily, and be not weary of it.

D I R E C T I O N V .

PREsently give over your known and wilful sins. Make a stand, and go that way no farther. Be drunk no more: but avoid the place and occasion of it. Cast away your lusts and sinful pleasures with detestation. Curse and swear and rail no more: and if you have wronged any, restore as *Zacheus* did. If you will commit again your old sins, what blessing can you expect on the means for conversion?

D I R E C T I O N V I .

PREsently, if possible, change your company. Not by forsaking your necessary relations, but your unnecessary sinful companions; and join yourselves with those that fear the Lord.

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D I R E C T I O N VII.

Deliver up yourselves to the Lord Jesus as the physician of your souls, that he may pardon you by his Blood, and sanctify you by his Spirit, by his Word and Ministers, the instruments of his Spirit. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; there is no coming to the Father but by him, John xiv. 6. Nor is there any other name under heaven, by which you can be saved, Acts iv. 12. Study therefore his person and nature, and what he has done and suffered for you, and what he is to you; and what he will be: and how he is fitted to the full supply of all your necessities.

D I R E C T I O N VIII.

IF you mean, indeed, to turn and live, *do it without delay*. If you be not willing to turn to-day, you are not willing to do it at all. Remember you are all this while in your blood; under the guilt of many thousand sins, and under God's wrath, and you stand at the very brink of hell; there is but a step between you and death. And this is not a case for a man to be quiet in. Up therefore presently, and fly for your lives; as you would be gone out of your house, if it were all on fire over your head. O, if you did but know what danger you live in, and what daily unspeakable loss you do sustain, and what a safer and sweeter life you might live, you would not stand trifling, but presently turn. Multitudes miscarry who wilfully delay, when they are convinced that it must be done. Your lives are short and uncertain; and what a case are you in, if you die before you thoroughly turn? You have staid too long already; and wronged God too long; sin gets strength and rooting while you delay. Your conversion will grow more hard and doubtful. You have

have much to do, and therefore put not all off to the last, lest God forsake you, and give you up to yourselves, and then you are undone for ever.

D I R E C T I O N IX.

IF you will turn and live, do it *unreservedly, absolutely, and universally*. Think not to capitulate with Christ, and divide your heart betwixt him and the world; and to part with some sins, and keep the rest. This is but self-deluding; you must forsake all you have, or else you cannot be his disciples, Luke xiv. 26. 33. If you will not take God and heaven for your portion, and lay all below at the feet of Christ, but must needs also have your good things here, and have an earthly portion, and God and glory is not enough for you; it is in vain to dream of salvation on these terms; for it *will not be*. If you seem ever so religious, if yet it be but outside righteousness, this is as certain a way to death, as open prophaneness, though it be plausible.

D I R E C T I O N X.

IF you will turn and live, do it *resolvedly*, and stand not still deliberating, as if it were a doubtful case. Stand not wavering, as if you were yet uncertain, whether God or the flesh be the better master; or whether heaven or hell be the better end: or whether sin or holiness be the better way. But away with your former lusts, and presently, habitually, fixedly resolve: be not one day of one mind, and the next of another, but be at a point with all the world, and resolvedly give up yourselves and all you have, to God. Now, while you are reading or hearing this, resolve. Before you sleep another night, resolve. Before you stir from the place, resolve. Before Satan have time to take
you

you off, resolve. You never turn indeed, till you do resolve : and that with a firm and unchangeable Resolution.

And now I have done my part in this work, that you may turn at the call of God, and live. What will become of it, I cannot tell. I have cast the seed at God's command : but it is not in my power to give the increase. I can go no farther with my message : I cannot bring it to your heart, or make it work : I cannot do *your* parts for *you*, to entertain it. I cannot do *God's* part by opening your heart to cause you to entertain it : nor can I shew you heaven or hell to your eye-sight, nor give you new and tender hearts.

But, O thou that art the gracious Father of Spirits, thou hast sworn thou delightest not in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live ; deny not thy blessing to these persuasions and directions, and suffer not thine enemies to triumph in thy sight, and the great Deceiver of souls to prevail against thy Son, thy Spirit, and thy Word. O pity poor, unconverted sinners, that have no hearts to help or pity themselves : command the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dead to live, and let not sin and death be able to resist thee. Awake the secure : resolve the unresolved : confirm the wavering ; and let the eyes of sinners that read these lines, be next employed in weeping over their sins ; and bring them to themselves, and to thy Son, before their sin have brought them to perdition. If thou say but the word, these poor endeavours shall prosper to the winning of many a soul to their everlasting Joy, and thine everlasting Glory. *Amen.*

